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Parker

West Roxbury Sermons

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By

Theodore Parker

1837–1848

From Unpublished Manuscripts

With Introduction and
Biographical Sketch

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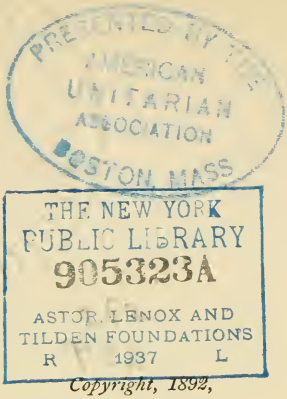

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INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the tests of a great preacher is his power to get and hold the ear of the community or of the age in which he lives. He may do it by studying the arts of popularity, or, like the great preachers and prophets of every age, he may do it when the ears of men are closed against him. Neither in his presentations of theology nor in his advocacy of reforms was THEODORE PARKER on the popular side. Strange as it seems to us to-day, his utterances were deemed so dangerous that at first no publisher would consent to put his name on Parker's pamphlets; and yet, either through the force of his ideas or through the force of his personality, he compelled a hearing.

When a man succeeds in doing this, the question often arises, What is the secret of his power? Sometimes this is easily apparent. It lies in the arts of rhetoric, in grace of elocution, in fascination of manner, in artistic power of depiction. Dickens or Howells could write interestingly about a three-legged stool. Chrysostom, if he had taken the same text, might have shown its relation to the Delphic tripod, and then preached a glowing sermon on the divine oracles.

On the other hand, the secret of oratorical or sermonic power is often strangely elusive; it resides in some mysterious element of personality which we can feel, but cannot define. The speaker magnetizes his audience, not by the force of his ideas or the force of his words, but by the personality which projects them. It is not the nature of the message, but the shock of the battery which we feel. The message might be changed; but if we were brought within the circuit of influence, we should feel the electricity just the same. This accounts for the great disparity which often exists between a man's spoken and written word. When we read in print the utterances of some of the great preachers of the present or the past, we fail to get any idea of their power. The thought is commonplace; it does not set us thinking. Exhortation is there; it does not move us. On the other hand, there are preachers who throw themselves in a remarkable manner into their writings. They magnetize type as easily as they can an audience. We feel the force of their ideas, the glow of their emotions, the play of their wit, the melting tenderness of their pathos, in the printed page. They set us thinking, or they set us feeling; they stir our pulses.

Theodore Parker's presence and delivery added, as every true preacher's must, to the power of his message; but his effective force did not depend upon his elocution or graces of delivery. Undoubtedly, he first attained prominence by what he had to say, not merely by the way he said it. His sermon was carefully pre-

pared before it was brought into the pulpit. It was not drawn merely from inkstand and dictionary, but from the best powers of mind and heart.

The writer's interest in Parker was kindled, not by hearing him, but by taking from the shelves of a library a volume of his sermons. It glowed with conviction and quickened thought and sentiment; it was a live coal from the altar.

There were thousands during the life of Parker, as there have been thousands since, who knew him only through the printed page. They could not see the fountain play every Sunday, but their brains and hearts were irrigated by the stream which flowed through the channel of the press. Such a stream may flow on and swell the currents of human life long after the fountain has ceased to play.

It was said of Increase Mather by his admiring parishioners that he seldom preached a sermon that was not worth printing. After Parker came into public notice and influence in Boston, the demand for the publication of his sermons was so constant that we may suppose his warmest admirers held his discourses in similar esteem. He preached much on the topics of the time; and many of his most direct and forcible sermons in that influential period of his life were printed at once by his followers. The English edition of Theodore Parker's works, in fourteen volumes, edited by Frances Power Cobbe, contains the cream of all that he wrote in the most active period of his life, — his discourses on "Religion," on "Slavery," "Politics,"

"Social Science," his "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," his "Historic Americans," "Prayers," and much miscellaneous matter. In the Boston Public Library there is a large collection of pamphlets, duplicating some of the subjects in these volumes, giving many discussions and discourses of the hour, and showing how remarkably fruitful and industrious was their author.

The period in Parker's life which has not been covered in his publications, and which was therefore known only by those who came into personal relations with him as parishioners, is the period of his ministry at West Roxbury, Massachusetts. This volume therefore has a twofold *raison d'être*. First, it throws light upon Parker's character and development by presenting some of his early and hitherto unpublished sermons. Secondly, the sermons themselves deal with themes of perennial interest, and have an immediate relation to life and character.

It is natural that the early period of a public man's life should be the last to receive attention. It is not until he has made his way into fame that people begin to ask how he got there, and to study the trail he followed. His early works are, then, most valuable as links in the chain of his development. It is true of Parker as of Channing, that the development of his opinions needs to be studied with reference to their chronological order. His public reputation, foreshadowed by his South Boston sermon in 1841, really began when he came to Boston, Feb. 16, 1845, to preach

at the Melodeon in the forenoon, though still retaining his connection with the West Roxbury parish, and preaching there in the afternoon. The Theodore Parker the public is familiar with is the Theodore Parker of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society. Yet before he began to preach in Boston, he had preached 362 sermons to his West Roxbury congregation. Counting his exchanges, he had preached 766 times. He was then thirty-five years of age, and had been pastor of the West Roxbury church for eight years. Of these 362 sermons, the discourse on "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," and the five discourses on "Matters pertaining to Religion," given in the autumn of 1841, were printed, the first one in pamphlet form; the others were reported in the New York "Tribune," and published in a volume the next spring.

More than two years ago the whole collection of Parker's sermons in manuscript was kindly placed at my service by his literary executor, Mr. Frank B. Sanborn. They are 925 in number, and have been carefully bound. An interesting guide-book to this vast mass of manuscript is Parker's index, kept in a square blank-book, in his own hand, in a systematic way. It is entitled "Preachings." In one column he records consecutively the number of preachings; in a second column the number of the sermon, followed by the record of place, time, subject, and text. In the latter part of the book there is another list of sermons, with number, subject, text, and occasionally comments on his sermons. This book furnishes an indication of

Parker's own relative estimate of his unpublished discourses. Another guide in studying them has been one which every minister will appreciate. When we find a sermon preached ten or a dozen, or, as with one of Parker's sermons, twenty-five times, it is a sufficient indication that the sermon was a favorite one with the preacher and his audiences. I have picked out, therefore, those which he preached most on exchange.

What shall we say, then, of these earlier sermons of Parker, covering as they do in number more than one fourth of his manuscripts? He has left us his own testimony as to the general fruitfulness and interest of this early period when he was spreading his wings and learning to fly.

On leaving the Divinity School, to which, against the advice of many friends, he had been drawn by irresistible attraction, Parker preached in various places, particularly Salem and Northfield, until called to West Roxbury. He wrote about forty sermons before his settlement. Of these early sermons he says, in his "Experience as a Minister": —

"Of course, my first sermons were only imitations; and even if the thought might perhaps be original, the form was old, the stereotype of the pulpit. I preached with fear and trembling, and wondered that old and mature persons, rich in the experience of life, should listen to a young man, who might indeed have read and thought, but yet had had no time to live much and know things by heart. I took all possible pains with the matter of the discourse, and always appealed to the religious instinct in mankind. At the beginning I resolved to preach the natural laws of man as they are writ in

his constitution, no less and no more. After preaching a few months in various places, and feeling my way into the consciousness of man, I determined to preach nothing as religion which I had not experienced inwardly and made my own, knowing it by heart. Thus not only the intellectual, but also the religious part of my sermons would rest on facts that I was sure of, and not on the word of another."

Of these forty sermons preached before settlement, seven were Divinity School exercises, and written on the following topics, — "Idolatry," "Excuses of the Irreligious," "The Way of Salvation," "Disinterested Virtue," "Retribution," "Necessity of an Honest Life," "Religion a Principle and Sentiment." These Divinity School discourses are what we might expect of a young theological student. Parker properly characterized them as imitation sermons. There was no lack of earnestness and sincerity; but their form was conventional. His progressive spirit is easily apparent in these early sermons; but they were not aggressive or polemic. He had not entered into the storm and stress which came upon him six years later.

The spirit in which Parker did his work at West Roxbury, on his settlement in 1837, is set forth in his own recital of his experiences as a minister: —

"On the longest day of 1837 I was ordained minister of the Unitarian church and congregation at West Roxbury, a little village near Boston, — one of the smallest societies in New England, — where I found men and women whose friendship is still dear and instructive. . . . For the first year or two the congregation did not exceed seventy persons, including the children. I soon became well acquainted with all

in the little parish, where I found some men of rare enlightenment, some truly generous and noble souls. I knew the characters of all, and the thoughts of such as had them. I took great pains with the composition of my sermons; they were never out of my mind. I had an intense delight in writing and preaching; but I was a learner quite as much as a teacher, and was feeling my way forward and upward with one hand, while I tried to lead men with the other. I preached natural laws, nothing on the authority of any church, any tradition, any sect, though I sought illustration and confirmation from all these sources. For historical things I told the historical evidence; for spiritual things I found ready proof in the primal instincts of the soul, and confirmation in the life of religious men. The simple life of the farmers, mechanics, and milkmen about me, of its own accord, turned into a sort of poetry, and reappeared in the sermons, as the green woods not far off looked in at the windows of the meeting-house. I think I preached only what I had experienced in my own inward consciousness, which widened and grew richer as I came into practical contact with living men, turned time into life, and mere thought became character."

It was said by Parker's parishioners in West Roxbury, who afterward heard him in Boston, that some of his most beautiful discourses were those preached in the little country church which he loved so well. He dealt not only with the great problems of the universe, but with the problems of daily life. The topics of his first year's discourses, after his settlement, were nearly all practical themes, such as "The Use of Crosses," "Spirituality of Man," "Knowing Thyself," "The Duty of Veracity," "Self-Renewal," "Tranquillity," "Labor," "Happy Home," "A Penny a Day," "Self-

Command," "Resignation," "Independence," "Education," etc. There was one sermon, on "The Fall of Man," more or less polemical ; and he also wrote in that year two sermons on "Contradictions in Scripture," but he tells us in his record-book, "These two were not preached till fifty-five other sermons were written." In this instance at least, he was not hasty in presenting new theories or in attacking old ones.

In reading over and preparing for the press this volume of Parker's unpublished sermons, I have purposely omitted those of his early years on doctrinal subjects, which he treated more fully and with greater maturity in later life. If we wish to study a man's doctrinal system, it is best to take it when it is most developed. We must wait until the mind has attained its best culture, and until the intellect has had time to digest its accumulations. With feeling and sentiment it is different; these are often warmest, most buoyant and influential, in one's early ministry. Parker's feelings never could be extinguished; they surged up all through his life in his most powerful sermons against every form of injustice and wrong; but it is interesting to see them in their early expression. The historic Theodore Parker, distinguished as a leader in social, moral, and theological reform, is a controversialist. When summoned by what he interpreted as the voice of duty, he entered the conflict with great power. He was led by the intensity of his feeling to say sharp and bitter things, which served to alienate some of his Unitarian brethren who might not have been alienated

by his doctrines. His sermons became far less conventional; they were more intellectual, more scholastic, adorned with the pictures woven by a glowing imagination. We miss the tranquillity of the studious, happy life in the country parsonage, surrounded by genial and loving parishioners, to whom he tenderly and faithfully ministered. Very significant and pathetic is his entry in the index of his sermons, after No. 413, in 1846. "Here sorrowfully I end my connection with the parish in West Roxbury. Alas, me!"

The present volume, therefore, is in some respects a new contribution to the mental and religious history of Theodore Parker. He does not appear here so much as the reformer or controversialist, but as the preacher of a suburban parish, breaking the bread of life to his congregation from week to week. Many know what Parker's great sermons were. It will be interesting to see what was the weekly fare he gave to his congregation. They are sermons chosen not so much for their thought-power as for their relation to life and conduct, and are as good to-day as when they were delivered. They cover the period from the beginning of his ministry at West Roxbury to the year following his settlement in Boston. Six of them were delivered before his famous South Boston sermon; and nine were delivered after it. Three were delivered both in West Roxbury and in Boston, when Parker was preaching in the morning in Boston and in the afternoon at "home," as he called the West Roxbury pulpit. Two of them were delivered in 1846, the year after he began preaching

in Boston. They show that the spirit of the West Roxbury ministry was continued in Boston.

The work of transcribing and preparing the manuscripts has been an interesting but difficult task. Parker was an inspired writer, not an inspired penman. His earliest sermons are comparatively legible, but the trail of his pen soon becomes difficult to follow, and leads the transcriber into mazes of doubt and conjecture. The use of abbreviations increases the difficulty. The transcripts were first made in the rough by a typewriter, and then subjected to two and sometimes three comparisons with the original. Difficult passages have been submitted to experts, but for the general accuracy of transcription the reader is most indebted to my wife, Mrs. Isabel C. Barrows, who has carefully compared each line with the original manuscript. Occasionally a sentence which could be spared has been omitted on account of some unconquerable word. The punctuation has been modernized, but the characteristics of Parker's style, often leading to peculiar and individual turns of expression, have been preserved. Here and there in the manuscripts are indications that extemporaneous illustrations were introduced; but the sermons show for the most part the nature and extent of Parker's pulpit preparation. The man and the day must be added to reproduce the impression they made.

In selecting the sermons, I have had the advantage of the judgment of Rev. Samuel Longfellow in regard to some, and of Rev. O. B. Frothingham in regard

to others. Mr. Sanborn has kindly read the revised proof.

Undoubtedly, were Parker living now, he would change a few expressions in his sermons. Keeping abreast of modern scholarship, as he certainly would have done, such changes would here and there have been necessary. In his sermon on "Tranquillity," for instance, he speaks of three millions of Hebrew slaves rising as one man. Had he been familiar with the result of later biblical criticism, he would have reduced these magnificent millions to smaller proportions. Yet it is remarkable that so few changes are necessary. Parker, if behind modern scholarship, was often in advance of modern thought. Fifteen years before Darwin's "Origin of Species" was printed, he partially anticipated the development theory in his sermon on "Christian Advancement" (1844).

It is proper that the reader should know that while the work of the Editor and his wife has been wholly a labor of love, the cost of transcription was generously borne by three of "the old guard," — Mr. John L. Whiting, Mr. John C. Haynes, and Mr. A. A. Burrage. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the main facts of Parker's career, a brief sketch of his life has been contributed by Mr. Sanborn.

SAMUEL J. BARROWS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

I HAVE been asked, as I was asked ten years ago, when an edition of Theodore Parker's "Prayers" was reprinted, to furnish a brief sketch of the man, whom I knew intimately, and whom few that saw or heard him could ever forget. He was born in Lexington, two miles south of the battle-ground (where his grandfather commanded the minute-men of Lexington, April 19, 1775), on the farm of his father, John Parker, Aug. 24, 1810; he died in Florence, May 10, 1860, and is buried, with Landor, Mrs. Browning, and other illustrious Protestants, in the small and crowded cemetery outside the old walls of that city of Dante and Michael Angelo, — men whom he resembled in courage and faith, and somewhat in fortune. I would not compare him to the half-insane monk, Savonarola, whom he equalled as a preacher; for Parker never yielded to the delusions of power, and never had occasion to recant or retract. Over his grave, two months ago, the sculptor Story, with funds contributed by the friends of freedom and of Parker, — they were never disjoined, —

placed a monument bearing the Platonic features of the man, and inscribed, —

THEODORE PARKER,

THE GREAT AMERICAN PREACHER.

This volume will indicate how early and by what rich eloquence, yet simple, searching, and full of high aspiration, Parker won this title. He had educated himself at home, and in the schools which he taught, rather than in those where he was pupil, when, in 1834, he entered the Divinity School of Cambridge, where Andrews Norton, Henry Ware the younger, and Doctor Palfrey, the historian, became his instructors in theology. Graduating thence in 1836, he entered the pulpit with diffidence and hope, and at the age of twenty-seven began to preach as a pastor at West Roxbury, where the sermons in this collection were delivered to a small congregation, gradually growing larger as the remarkable powers of this rustic scholar and apostle began to be appreciated in the neighboring city of Boston, of which Parker's country parish has now become a rural quarter. In 1837–45 it was, as Ellery Channing said of Baker Farm, a

> "Cell of seclusion,
> Haunt of old Time,"

where the hours were long, the books many, the scholastic friends few, and where Parker laid broad the foundations of that scholarship which he afterward used so effectively. But in these early sermons little display of learning appears; here is heart speaking to

heart, and soul inquiring of soul, not with Hebrew treachery, but with Saxon sincerity, "Art thou in health, my brother?"

In 1843 his own physical health began to suffer, and he took a year's furlough for a visit to Europe, where no man ever put his days to better interest, — fixing in his retentive mind, through those searching and profound eyes of his, the latitude and longitude of the religious, political, and social world of his time, as well as the situation of cities, the manners of men, the secret treasure of libraries, and the marvellous accumulations of art, religious and pagan. Fortunate in his companions, among whom were Horace Mann, Dr. Howe the philanthropist, and his poetic wife, he was also fortunate in the friends he made in England and Germany, among whom may be named that venerable scholar, Dr. Martineau, who has done for his native country what Parker did for America, through a longer life and a more precise scholarship, though with an eloquence less fervid and popular.

Returned to New England, Parker soon found himself invited to preach to a larger audience in Boston, and there, Feb. 16, 1845, he gave his first discourse in the old Melodeon on Washington Street, on "The Indispensableness of True Religion for Man's Welfare in his Individual and Social Life." That title might serve for the whole body of his doctrine and especially for this volume, — since true religion and man's welfare are his constant themes in these pages. But the place and the crisis — the same which the young poet

Lowell depicted in his verses of that period ("The Present Crisis") — soon invited him to a mission truly apostolic, in which he fairly earned the name our sculptor has given him. It was left for Story's friend, this same young poet, Lowell, in 1848, when Parker had been for three years wrestling with principalities and powers at Boston, to describe the great preacher in words which need but little change, in view of his later life, — so true is the critical insight: —

"Here comes Parker, the Orson of parsons, a man
Whom the Church undertook to put under her ban;
. . . . . .
But the ban was too small, or the man was too big,
For he recks not their bells, books, and candles a fig.
He don't look like a man who would *stay* treated shabbily,
Sophroniscus's son's head o'er the features of Rabelais;
He bangs and bethwacks them, — their backs he salutes
With the whole tree of knowledge torn up by the roots.
. . . . . .
Now, P.'s creed than yours may be lighter or darker,
But in one thing 't is clear he has faith; namely — Parker.
And this is what makes him the crowd-drawing preacher,
There 's a background of god to each hard-working feature;
Every word that he speaks has been fierily furnaced
In the blast of a life that has struggled in earnest.
. . . . . .
But his periods fall on you, stroke after stroke,
Like the blows of a lumberman felling an oak.
. . . . . .
You forget the man wholly, — you 're thankful to meet
With a preacher who smacks of the field and the street,
And to hear, you 're not over-particular whence,
Almost Taylor's profusion, quite Latimer's sense."

This last line might well describe these early sermons; and here I might leave the subject. But the

great work of Parker's life was still before him at the age of thirty-five, as that of most men is. He preached in Boston, and lectured and spoke at political gatherings and before committees of the Massachusetts Legislature, for fourteen years after February, 1845, and both his toil and its result were enormous. The labor broke him down, and in January, 1859, he left Boston for the West Indies, Switzerland, and, finally, Italy; from that beautiful land he never returned. His mortal illness came upon him at Rome, but he refused to die in that seat of ecclesiastic tyranny, and what was then political slavery. He bent his will, strong even in that agony, toward the freer air of Florence, and in that he breathed for a few weeks, with pain and languor, until death came to relieve him one lovely morning in May, —

> "And there, *at Florence*, gave
> His body to that pleasant country's earth,
> And his pure soul unto his captain Christ,[1]
> Under whose colors he had fought so long."

I have cited Lowell, our second among American critics, as to the Parker of 1845–48. Let me now recall the words of a critic, greater and of profounder insight, Emerson, uttered at the funeral service for Parker at Boston, in June, 1860. They cover the

[1] I make no scruple to apply this eulogy of the "banished Norfolk" to Theodore Parker, for Jesus was his captain, though not his God. It has never been said that the Romans were more valiant when their general was worshipped as a deity, than when he was imitated as a hero.

period following that in which Lowell described him, and have even greater weight: —

"He has so woven himself in these few years (1845–1859) into the history of Boston, that he can never be left out of your annals. In the plain lessons of Theodore Parker, in this Music Hall,[1] in Faneuil Hall, or in legislative committee rooms, the true temper and authentic record of those days will be read. The next generation will care little for fine gentlemen who behaved shabbily, but it will read very intelligently in his rough story, fortified with exact anecdotes, precise with names and dates, what part was taken by each actor; who threw himself into the cause of humanity; who came to the rescue of civilization at a hard pinch, — and who blocked its course. In terrible earnest he denounced the public crime, and meted out to every official, high and low, his true portion. He took away the reproach of silent consent that would otherwise have lain against the indignant minority. The brave know the brave. His manly enemies honored him; and it is well known that his great hospitable heart was the sanctuary to which every soul conscious of an earnest opinion came for sympathy. For every sound heart loves a responsible person, — one who does not in generous company say generous things, and in mean company base things, but says one thing, now cheerfully, now indignantly, but always because he must. Ah, my brave brother! it seems as if, in a frivolous age, our loss were immense, and your place cannot be supplied. But the nature of the world will affirm to all men, in all times, that which for twenty-five years you valiantly spoke; the winds of Italy murmur the same truth over your grave; the winds of America over these bereaved streets. The sea that bore your mourners home affirms it, the stars in their courses, and the inspirations of youth; whilst the polished and pleasant traitors to human

[1] He preached there for seven years.

rights, with perverted learning and disgraced graces, rot and are forgotten with their double tongue, saying all that is sordid for the corruption of man."

It was needful for Emerson to say this, with a censure as sharp as Parker's own, in that dismal day before our Civil War, when the horizon looked darkest, and the fortunes of our country trembled in the balance. Much has been destroyed and forgotten since then, and much will hereafter come into remembrance that has been for a time forgotten.

> "Now has descended a serener hour,
> And with inconstant fortune friends return."

I seem to recognize in the advanced theology of Andover and Princeton, in the promotion to high clerical preferment of the tolerant and forward-looking Dr. Brooks, and in the lofty theologic ideal of Dr. Lyman Abbott, whom crowds in Boston and Brooklyn throng to hear, some of the harvest for which Emerson and Parker sowed the seed.

F. B. SANBORN.

SERMONS.

I.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

MATTHEW XXV. 14–30.

THE idea which this parable was designed to set forth is this: that a man's happiness on earth and in heaven depends solely upon the use he makes of his powers. Various faculties and different opportunities are afforded to different men; but a man's merit and virtue consist entirely in the use he makes of them. Thus he who receives two talents and gains two is no less meritorious than he who receives five and gains other five, nor is the reward the less. It is the use, not the amount, of talents that constitutes virtue and of course happiness; for virtue is the immediate cause of happiness.

Now, there is a great variety in the gifts men are endowed with. Nature is everywhere various and manifold, and wisely is this variety extended to man. If all men were just alike in natural

powers and opportunities to use them, probably there would be as little progressive improvement in man as in the birds and the fishes. But now no two men are alike endowed; the one has that gift, another this. One possesses all bodily virtues; another is gifted with great powers of mind; and a third possesses the divinest of Nature's gifts, superior moral powers. These are man's noblest faculties. Mind is indeed great. To measure the universe, ponder the stars in the balance of reason; to understand the vast world around us or within; to see effects in their causes, and foretell what will be the result of this or of that; to detect causes in events and determine whence this was produced and how, and in the mirror of the present day to read the future and the past, — these are indeed noble powers, and bespeak the proud pre-eminence of him who is made but a little lower than the angels, and is crowned with glory and honor and immortality. But a man's happiness is not the necessary result of these powers of mind. Splendid as they may be, they are not our noblest; for that power which controls appetite, shuts up passion within its just limits, and makes them both subservient to our will, is far greater. He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city. He who every day does God's will, thinks his thoughts, feels his sentiments,

lives the life of love, and holds divinest intercourse with him by prayer, — he is as much nobler than the man of the greatest powers of mind as the archangel is nobler than the prince of darkness, who is only "archangel ruined;" that is, deprived of morality.

All men perhaps are not capable of the loftiest extent of mind, therefore it is wise and merciful that happiness does not depend upon it; for then happiness would be excluded from the major part of mankind, and this would be in direct contradiction with the whole analogy of Nature. For there all things the most useful are the most common. Every man knows that celestial wisdom of the heart is the principal thing, when he shudders at the wickedness of genius, and marks the terrific deviations from the course of virtue, and ponders upon the melancholy results.

Now, though there is no doubt a greater difference in the voluntary use men make of their intellectual talents than in the talents themselves, yet perhaps the difference in moral and religious powers is less still than in our faculties of mind. So though it is not possible that all men, after all their strivings, can attain the same stature of greatness of mind, yet all may attain the same measure of morality and the same eminence in every virtue. All men's duties are the same in

this respect; and if all have not the power of discharging a duty, then of course the duty ceases. Now, that state and degree of morality which men are to strive after is simply this: complete conformity with the law of our being, the coincidence of our will with that of the divine will, as all wisdom is the coincidence of our thought with that of the Almighty. Now, every man is capable of this, for he confesses it to himself whenever he acknowledges he has done wrong, and repents of it; for how can a man be said to have done wrong, when he has merely failed of doing what it was impossible to do? We see then that men's moral powers, though doubtless they differ one from another, are all alike in this: they are capable of being carried out to perfection, making our will coincident with God's. And since happiness depends most of all upon the use, and not the amount, of moral powers, then our blessedness in this life, and that to come, must depend upon the degree of culture we have bestowed upon these moral and religious faculties.

Now, Jesus, in the parable, admits this difference in the talents and opportunities of men, when he represents one as receiving five, another two, another one, and declares that each man's portion was capable of being converted to the same use, — that is, of being carried out to perfection, — when he

shows that all were to be judged by the same standard, and to answer to the same question, "What hast thou done with the talents committed unto thee?"

The parable states that the Lord of the servant came and reckoned with them and gave judgment according to the use made of his charge. Now, let us suppose for a moment that this question were at this moment to be put individually to all men, "What hast thou done with the talents lent thee?" How varied would be the replies; what different emotions would be painted upon men's faces at this startling query! What would become of the man of seeming, who cares nothing about being what he seems? How different would be the replies of the men of different ages and countries of the world! The Christian and the infidel, the worshipper of idols and the Mahometan, he who reveres beast and bird, the sun-worshipper and the Jew, might come up together to reply. The naked African might say, "Lord, thou gavest me but one talent. I have used it diligently. I deemed that thou didst dwell in every little animal upon the earth, and I bowed to thee and offered sacrifice. I felt thy breath in the wind, and lay prostrate before thee. I feared thy anger and offered thee my all. Accept, Lord, the best of my feeble services." The Lord must say, "Thou hadst but one talent,

yet thou hast used it well; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The Jew of olden time might come up from the banks of the Jordan, his hands hardened with toil for the sanctuary, his feet weary with pilgrimage in the desert, and his garments spotted with the blood of his sacrifice. He might say, "Here are the results of my gain. I deemed that thou didst command me to toil on in the wilderness, hoping for the promised land; that thou didst exact hard service from me, my gold for thy tabernacle, my oxen and my sheep for thy altar, my toil for thy sanctuary, and my attention to a thousand minute ceremonies. So I have kept thy law, minute and burdensome as it is, and here are the proofs of my toil. Take that which is thine own, and pardon my shortcomings." The savage would come up from every land, from the North and the South, from the East and the West, and would say, "Lord, I deemed thee an hard master, making thy yoke grievous and thy burdens heavy. The way of duty was difficult to find and more difficult to keep. Yet have we essayed to do thy will." The Indian from the Ganges would say, "I believed that thou didst delight in the mortification of my body, therefore have I inflicted pain upon myself. I have scourged my body, have tortured my flesh, mutilated my limbs, and emaciated my whole frame. I

thought that thou wouldst be most pleased should I contemplate thee alone. Therefore I forsook the abodes of my fellows; I dwelt in the mountain and the desert; the cold and the heat have done their work upon me; and still I have glorified thy name, for thou wouldst have me do so. I knew thou wast austere and hard toward me, and in my worship of sorrow I have offered thee the choicest of my affections, my goods, my body, my thoughts. I have consumed these my children as a whole burnt offering to thee, — there is blood upon my head; and at last I have given my own mutilated and wretched body. Lord, here is thy talent."

The careless man, he who was nurtured in the arms of a Christian society, yet turned away from this parent, would come and say, "Lord, thou gavest me five talents. Here are they, carefully wrapped up in the napkin. I knew the nobleness of my nature, the godlikeness of my spiritual powers, yet I cared not to exercise them. I felt that riches take to themselves wings and fly away, yet I trusted solely in them, uncertain as they were. Knowing that they were not bread, I labored for them alone; and that they were but nought, I spent for them all my strength. Thou gavest me blessings; yet I warmed not men's hearts with gratitude, gave not to the poor, cared not for the true riches."

The man of pleasure might say, "I knew the sacredness of duty, the deep joy and blessedness of obedience. I saw the examples of the chosen ones, Abraham and Isaac and Moses and Jesus and Paul and the pious of my own day. I knew thou wast a God of loving-kindness and tender mercy, continually bestowing favors and promising even eternal happiness; but I cared nothing for duty, but sought only pleasure. I mocked at the examples of goodness thou hadst set before me, and gave myself no concern about my loftiest and divinest powers, but lived only to the flesh. I occupied my mind with trifles, — things that perish in the using, — while immortality and heaven were before me."

Here and there would come the true Christians who had borne the burden of self-denial in the heat of the day, who had toiled up the mountain of temptation till they stood on the high ground of duty and self-control, and saw themselves transfigured into shapes of greater truth and holiness, till they felt all the meaning of virtue, all the energy of prayer, and all the blessedness of Christianity. To such well may the Lord say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; thou hast been faithful over few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." For already has he entered the kingdom; already is all moral power in heaven and earth given unto

him, and already have Christ and the Father taken up their abode with him.

Now, this reward for the use of our powers is no figure of speech, no figment of fancy; it is something real. We are not to expect that recompense will be made to a man in an outward manner, so that so much of virtuous action, of just thought, of true feeling, shall be determined, and therefore so much recompense be given from an outward source; but the reward is the natural, unavoidable consequence which follows from well-doing. We are not to expect that during all a man's life his virtue or selfishness will exert no influence upon him, bringing him no reward or punishment, no pleasure and no pain, but at some future day, in another world, it shall be done, his virtues being balanced by blessedness, and his vices by unhappiness. This is not the doctrine of the Scriptures. We are nowhere told in them, and reason will not lead to the conclusion, that any positive and outward reward shall be given from a foreign source as the recompense of our character, but that character itself is its own recompense. All the outward universe is too poor a return, is no return for godliness. The recompense for good deeds comes from the other side, from the inner man. The kingdom of heaven is its recompense; but that is within us. The empire of darkness is the penalty of violated law, of duties

undone, holy feelings suppressed ; but that empire of darkness is within us, and the prince of darkness is every wicked man. Godliness is the kingdom of heaven, ungodliness the kingdom of hell; they are within the breast of the Christian and the un-Christian.

Nor again are we to suppose that retribution is put off till a distant day. True, it is so represented in the parable, but the closing and main idea, and not the literal construction alone, is to be regarded ; and taking this as our guide, we are no more to suppose that retribution is put off till the end of the world than that the Almighty is absent from any part of the universe. No, the Almighty reckons with us every day ; every day is a day of judgment upon all preceding actions. The thoughts we now form and the train of ideas that sweeps through our minds are the results of previous thoughts, and of other foregoing trains of ideas which extend back to our very infancy, as the rose which blooms to-day is the fruit of all the summers and winters since creation, and could not exist had not they gone before. Had our previous thoughts been otherwise, the present thought could not exist in our minds. This accounts for the different estimates men form of the same action or sentiment, and shows that the words of Christ are literally true, — that for every idle word men shall account at the

day of judgment. All coming time sits in judgment upon the past. In its course all feelings and thoughts will be reproduced in us, as each goes to make up our character; and thus shall it be accounted for, and the recompense for the good or bad use of our talents be afforded us.

The history of a man's life is thus the judgment of a man's life. The footprints of justice are deeply set along the highway we travel. Not only are our actions productive of an effect, good or bad, upon us, but our most secret thoughts and feelings, those which are shut up in the sanctuary of our own hearts and dwelt upon in secret, never communicated to our most intimate friend, — all these have their recompense. If not to-day, at length it comes. Justice, though slow, is always sure, for it is the minister of the Almighty to make men blessed. Even those thoughts which we only cherish upon the express condition of their never appearing in our conduct, even they have their reward; and almost always it cometh speedily. But if not, if anything is swept away unjudged, unrewarded, unpunished, the stream of time beareth it to the great ocean of eternity, where complete justice will be done, and where we trust each man will at length make amends for the neglect and disobedience of this life.

Were we permitted to penetrate that holy of ho-

lies, the good man's heart, where he dwells in the intimate presence of God and holds high converse, we should find there a stronger persuasion to use well the many talents committed to us than if one rose from the dead. Nay, if one with all the wisdom of truth, all the eloquence of persuasion, should attempt to lead us, his preaching were cold and profitless in comparison with that silent sermon which every good man delivers to him who will attend. The example of Jesus is more eloquent than even his words, though he spake as man never spoke. And if the example of the good is one of the strongest and most persuasive, so on the other hand the condition of the wicked would be a most useful and solemn warning against any misuse of our talents. Everywhere in the universe there is a perfect system of profit and loss, — so much virtue and so much heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, religion ; so much happiness in this life, so much blessedness in that to come. On the other hand, so much wickedness, vicious indulgence, profligacy, so much misery. The time a man steals from his proper devotions and hours consecrated to the improvement of his immortal self, and what he foolishly squanders, is just so much taken from this happiness. The fraud one commits, like the stone thrown into the air, falls upon his own head ; his iniquity returns into his own bosom. No man can

defraud his neighbor so much as he injures himself by that very act. A man cozens his fellow of a penny, but he cozens his own conscience of a pound. He blesses in little, and is profited in much. Herein is the greatness and perfection of God's laws manifest, that by his own act and within his own heart is perfect justice done. No minute act is too little to receive notice, none too large to go unjudged. There is no room for accident. Nought comes amiss. They who use well their talents enter into the Master's glory; faithful in little, they will likewise be faithful in much. Their reward is with them. They mount up toward heaven like eagles; they run and are not weary, and walk and are not faint. The ungodly are not so; the men of seeming are but as chaff which the wind driveth away; the unprofitable servant cannot hope to find harvest where he has scattered no seed.

To two classes of men the parable speaks. To those who spend their lives carelessly, making no effort for virtue, heedless of opportunity, deaf to God's Spirit speaking in every man, it saith, "Where are the talents committed to thee?" To him who in defiance of his better nature, in utter violation of the sacred voice of duty, forsakes the way of godliness, giving loose rein to appetite and passion, it utters its deep rebuke, "What hast thou done?" But to the true Christian it whispers words

of peace and speaks with the voice of Jesus, "Lo, God is with thee unto the end of the world. Go on in thine heavenly course. Heaven lies about thee; peace dwells within. Thou art a son of the kingdom; thou art a son of God."

1837.

II.

SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENCE.

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. — Rev. iii. 15.

MAN has two natures. When we look upon one of them, we declare him to be a most lofty and noble creation. How vast his powers! He subdues Nature unto his hand, takes the rude and savage earth and creates it anew in his own image. He stamps his own likeness upon all things around him; lives *in* the present, but *upon* the past, and *for* the future. What a godlike nature is in him, what loftiest aspirations, reachings forward after perfection in all his best attributes, which are also the attributes of the Almighty! Earth puts no limit to these strivings. Onward and still ever on, life in, life out, would he go, never satisfied with the attained, but restlessly striving after the highest good attainable. This is man living manlike, living for most worthy ends, — the ends for which he was designed and created. When such aspirations fire the soul, the whole of

this manifold life which we lead, its most humble labors as well as its greatest, its trials, encouragements, prosperities, and adversities, are all ministering servants to help forward the great design, — of unfolding and making perfect the spiritual nature of man, which is his immortal nature. To such an one all this life of ours, with the thousand influences of Nature, is a powerful ally. The infinite power of the All-powerful is working in his behalf, as the whole force of the wind bears on the sail of the seaman to aid his course. But look at our nature in another, a depraved state, and the aspect is widely different. Those actions of the spirit in man are paralyzed. Aspirations after unattained virtue cease to bear us up above the low state we have reached. Reverence, the sublimest attribute of man, which brings him into the most intimate presence of the Supreme, and the restless instinct of perfection, become cold and still, though never wholly extinct. The whole active force of the man is directed to humble ends, — to providing for the body its food, its warmth, and its raiment, to the heaping together of gold and silver, to following some petty trifle. All these are well enough, even commendable, in their right places, when they engross only a just portion of a man's toil and attention ; but when they so far take possession of the man as to produce apathy upon all

other matters, and lead to complete spiritual indifference, then is the case indeed a lamentable one. The giant power of the man is directed to unworthy ends. Like Esau, he has sold his birthright for a morsel of meat; like Samson, he grinds corn at the mill of his enemies.

There are in every community those who, being innocent, do for that cause bestir them to good deeds; in whose pure souls there shines and beams with immortal effulgence the pure light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, shedding a glory along the path of life, and striving more and more unto the perfect day. Such souls there are now, as there ever have been since creation. Christianity born in men can never be quite extinguished and crushed out. No wise man will ever fear that religion will die out in this world, more than any other attribute of man. No one fears that man will cease to be a reasonable being or an active one or an industrious one; and as little cause have we to fear that the whole family of man will cease to be religious and spiritual. But as there are times when each man's reason needs to be excited, his activity aroused, so there are also periods when religion in its spirit and its power seems to produce little effect upon the mass of a community, and spirituality is wellnigh smothered in the cares and concerns of this life. Man is

as much a heavenly being as he is an earthly one, and far more so; for the meanest and most selfish of us all cannot live by bread alone. But there are many at all times — perhaps more than usual at this period —who care little for anything beyond this life, care far more for their bodies than their souls; and while they are tremblingly alive to every petty affair of yesterday which is to be forgotten to-morrow, they are dead to their immortal interests. It is unfortunately the case that there are those who care not enough about religion and spiritual matters even to oppose them or to ask about them.

It is to such a state of feeling that the writer alludes in his text; to the spiritually indifferent, — such as are neither cold nor hot, — whom he wishes were something decided either one way or the other.

By spiritual indifference is not meant a natural coldness of temperament, for many of this nature are possessed with a beautiful spirit of piety and devotion which alone seems to shed light and joy into their characters. This devotion may not be rapid, but still it may be sure. They will not glow with the enthusiasm of a Paul; but they will adhere with all his constancy, and stand like iron, not to be shaken. These the careless onlooker may call neither hot nor cold; but their heat is none the less active or powerful because unseen.

It is not ignorance of religious truth alone which constitutes spiritual indifference. Every man knows more of religion than the disciples of Jesus knew till long after his death. Yet they were not "neither hot nor cold." Many a rude savage feels the true spirit of religion leading him with resistless yearnings to the spirit land, — which he will as surely reach as the Christian if he follows his guide, — who knows by his mind as little religious truth as may well be. And on the other hand, there are those who have learned enough of the outside of Christianity who are totally indifferent as to the spirit of it; who care not at all to make themselves Christians, to inquire as to the real vitality of this religion, and to realize as life what they remotely apprehend as doctrine. The spiritually indifferent are characterized as having eyes, yet seeing not, ears, yet not hearing, hearts, and understanding not. They may, like the cool Pharisees, walk through the seemly round of religious duties, and bless God that they are not as other men, yet never feel in their hearts that beautiful principle of religion overruling their passions and guiding them on toward perfection, — listless, inattentive men, not positively bad nor positively good, men who care nothing about it.

Such, then, is spiritual indifference. Well may the apostle say, "I would thou wert either cold or

hot;" for there is no enemy so deadly to religion as this. Indeed, there is no state of mind so dangerous to the individual. A man may be an open enemy of religion, attempting by all the means in his power to undermine its foundations, to weaken its influence upon men's hearts, to work its final overthrow; yet in all this he may be sincere. And the beauty and truth of Christianity may shine forth in such lovely and sublime light that his veiled lids shall be penetrated, his heart touched, and he be raised to the high estate from which he has fallen. So too a man may be given to excess; passion may shake him to and fro; ambition, avarice, vice, may lead him; but so long as his conscience utters its deep rebukes, so long as he sorrows for his departure from the path of virtue, and even by this confesses the existence of religious emotions in his heart, so long there is hope. The good spirit in him may yet overcome; principle may overcome passion, and the kingdom of heaven displace the kingdom of hell in his heart. But to the man who is indifferent to religion; who cares not enough about it to ask if it be true or false; who attempts to check his loftiest aspirings until he sinks himself down to the rank of a brute in spiritual matters, — what power shall come to rescue him from the degradation whereinto he has hastened, what influence shall descend from the shores of light, from

God or man, to awaken his better spirit and renew the best attributes of a man within him? On him the common events of life fall idle. His callous heart seems proof against the calm influence of Nature; Conscience has been cheated into silence; and the kindling thoughts of the wise, with the beautiful promise of immortal life, all are unfelt by him.

The causes which produce spiritual indifference are various. In some it is the influence of a bad example. The man has grown up amid those who cared not for spiritual things, and he has unconsciously imbibed the principles and imitated the practice of those around him, thus receiving scepticism as it were by inheritance. Yet this is not necessarily the case. How often do we see the religious rising up amid the indifferent, even of the vicious, — some happy herb growing under the very shadow of the poison tree! Righteous Lot dwells in the midst of Sodom. All men from the least to the greatest are affected by those around them. We unconsciously copy the character of our associates. Hence in an irreligious community it is natural to suppose many will grow up in complete indifference to religion.

Another cause is want of education. Some are too ignorant to understand the full beauty of religion; they feel the sentiment of religion, but do not

reason and reflect upon the duties that arise from it. Hence they do not understand what it is, what it demands of them, or what it promises to afford them. Perhaps ignorance is not the chief cause of this indifference; and yet it is difficult to suppose that any man can understand it and still be indifferent. If a man understands his own nature and the religion which is necessary to it, it is as inconceivable that he should be indifferent as that a wise man should be indifferent to reason or to thought. The words of Jesus might be applied to most of the spiritually indifferent, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Few men can be so ignorant as to know nothing of religion; the instinct which leads to it is something born with every man. Religion has always found friends and enthusiastic supporters among the most ignorant classes of the people; the more profound and spiritual the religion, the greater the number of its followers among those whom custom had not perverted. It was these men whom Jesus addressed, and they heard him gladly; from such came his disciples. Not that ignorance is the mother of devotion, as some have impiously supposed, for the brightest lights of genius in every age have shone on the side of religion, but because their minds were not filled with prejudices which excluded spiritual religion.

A mistaken notion of Christianity leads often to indifference to the whole matter of religion. Many suppose that Christianity is the same thing now in form that it was in the early ages of the Church; and seeing that such a religion would be to us but an empty form, they unwisely conclude that all religion is no more, and therefore dismiss it from their thoughts. But is this so? Is it not true that Christianity is an increasing light, that its great principles come forth slowly and by degrees, that every age must expound them for itself, create its own form, while the eternal spirit remains the same, to be reproduced successively by every age? Christianity is not now apprehended in all its power; as man progresses he will discover new truths in the gospel, new meaning in life, new capabilities in himself. Christianity does not now, for want of a true appreciation of it, exert that true power over men's minds and hearts which it will one day obtain. Men see how the religious world is torn by controversies, the seamless coat of Christ rent as it were by wild beasts, hence they conclude there is nothing worth attending to in Christianity. "All cannot be right," say they, "they are so different; and if one is wrong, why not another, why not all?" But it would be just as wise to conclude that because all men cannot see alike, therefore there is no light nor vision, and so they may as

well close their eyes. Every sect doubtless has its errors; but each has its truths likewise. Some error seems necessary to man; but some truth is no less indispensable. No sect can stand a moment upon error alone. God grant that the time may soon come when some new manifestation of Christianity may take place that shall cast into the shade all present sects, all former developments of the religious sentiment, and stir men's hearts as they have never yet been moved, teach them wisdom which is pure and peaceable, give that peace and tranquillity and true blessedness which transcend all other bliss.

Other causes are the fierceness with which men rush into the business of the day, making themselves mere tools, spending all their force upon things which should receive but a part of it; so that they become mere buyers and sellers and laborers, instead of men buying and selling and laboring. When things temporal are counted as the all in all, things eternal must be forgotten. Worldliness is a foe to heavenliness; not that there is any opposition between this world and that to come, but because an excessive attention to the cares of life unfits the mind for higher concerns, though a proper attention to them is the best possible preparation for another world.

The effects of this indifference are easily per-

ceived. Man is degraded to an animal; his best powers, those which will give him most satisfaction during his whole life in this world and in that to come, are never called into exercise. Half the meaning of life is lost to him. He is called to encounter temptations which he will not resist, to bear crosses which he cannot endure, and to encounter trials which are too severe for him. All these have no meaning for him. If they are borne, he sees no end attained; he only feels their weight. In prosperity, he sees but animal blessings which spring out of the ground or are won by his toil, never realizes the gifts of an all-bounteous Father. To him the duties of life are no school for godliness; life itself is but the narrow spot he stands on, he knows not how and cares not why. Adversity will visit him as it comes upon all the sons of men, but what shall sustain him? He has built his house upon the sand. When the winds blow and beat vehemently upon the house, what wonder that it falls! Thus will life pass with him, — its blessings not half enjoyed, its lessons not understood, its duties yet unfulfilled. Death will come to convey him to another land which he is unfit to enter. He has not learned life in this world, how can he understand it in another?

Having thus far spoken of the nature, the causes, and the consequences of indifference to religion, it

remains to say a few words by way of conclusion upon the remedy.

Let a man reflect a little upon the nature of religion itself. Let him ask what is it, whence is it, and what does it profess to teach? If he ask these questions seriously, he will find that religion is not a matter to be made light of, or one on which man can be "neither hot nor cold," but one of the highest moment, which awakens the deepest feelings of the heart, and satisfies the sublimest aspirations of the soul. He will find that it is not an invention of the priest, sought out to give him a little brief authority over other men's weaknesses, but something that grows naturally out of the infinite faculties of man; that it is no less a want of every man than his daily bread. Let him look down into his heart and see if there is not a want which all the things of earth never can satisfy, and a desire which looks upward for the infinite Father and takes pleasure in worshipping, adoring him. Let him look backward upon his life and consider how he has grown up to his present stature, what wants he has had, what difficulties he has been aided through, what dangers he has shunned, not by his own might, but by a mysterious Providence which wisely holds the scales of life — and has led him safe through all. Let him consider how his dearest plans have never been thwarted but to

give him some greater blessings than he looked for, and how curiously this every-day life of his is fashioned and woven by the Almighty for wisest ends, and can he be indifferent still? Can any one after a consideration of these matters fail to feel his heart moved within him with deep religious emotions? While he is musing, the fire will burn. Let one whose faith is growing cold, and still more the indifferent man, contemplate this Christianity which he passes over and dismisses so coolly. Will he not find therein something which satisfies his longings, which is so true to his nature that it encourages all his best feelings, his highest aspirings, — everything, in short, which becomes a man, — and only forbids, and that mildly, whatever interferes with his completer manliness and prevents him in the discharge of duty and the way toward happiness.

When one thus contemplates Christianity, he will find that he cannot be indifferent to it. True, his opinions may differ from those of most of his fellows, if he has attempted to reproduce the spirit of Christianity within himself; and no man can pass judgment upon it fairly, or pretend to understand it, till this is done. But this is necessarily the case with independent minds. No two have the same idea of Christianity, for the reason that no man understands the whole of it, but each only

some fraction thereof. When one thus considers his nature, wants, hopes, undefined longings, and the nature of Christianity, its relation to him, and its perfect fitness to his better nature, can he be indifferent, caring for none of these things?

It is said that Liberal Christianity, as our doctrines are sometimes called, promotes spiritual indifference. It is admitted that we make no appeals to mean and selfish principles, present no eternal terrors to the eyes of men; but is spiritual indifference caused by the absence of such appeals and such fears? Jesus himself addressed only men's divinest principles; no vulgar selfishness was pressed into the service. What can there be in our doctrine which could encourage indifference? We know it is a doctrine which kindles the wise and good, which goes with the ignorant and the wretched, redeeming them from the bondage of superstition, and from sin, and enabling them to bear cheerfully the manifold burdens of life. It encourages men in life; it strengthens them calmly to pass away, saying, like martyred Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Yet pure as our faith may be, kindling as are the hopes it awakens, the prevision it imparts, it is lamentable that there is so much of spiritual indifference among us. It is sadly the truth that saving here and there a sainted few, Christianity

made for man, sent down by God for his blessing, does not bring forth half of its just fruits. There is enough of sanctimonious looks, enough attention perhaps to the appearance and form of godliness, but where is its power and spirit? There are listeners in churches, eloquent voices proclaiming truth; but does religion go to the market-place, the workshop, the fireside and fieldside? Does it mingle in our every-day concerns? Is it made real as life? An ancient philosopher lighted a lamp by day, and in the streets of a populous city sought for a man, a complete, true man; but he did not find one. Should he make the experiment now, and look for a true man, who is the only true Christian, would he find one? Would it be you or I? Why not?

1837.

III.

TRANQUILLITY.

Take heed, and be quiet. — Isa. vii. 4.
A meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. — 1 Peter iii. 4.

EVERY age is marked by a peculiar spirit, — a spirit of its own; for there are various elements in humanity, and each one must be developed in its turn. Hence we find that there are as many different epochs in the history of the human race as there are master ideas in the mind of the individual man. Every age therefore will have some virtues unknown to its predecessors, will manifest some vices which they had not, and be wanting in some quality previously unfolded.

The present age is marked by restless activity. Ours is an age of *little* enterprises, which every man undertakes by himself and carries fiercely onward. "The carpenter encourages the smith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smites the anvil." There is no rest; all is full of outward life. Commerce has multiplied her wings. The

prurient eye of curious research looks into everything. Old things are forgotten ; every man asks of his neighbor for some new thing. Nothing is good enough. What satisfied our fathers, men of stout hearts, only excites our contempt. "We will change all that," is the cry. Improvement is the word. Onward, without stop, is the index of the present day.

Amid many virtues never before called out there is one crying fault which shows itself everywhere. In little enterprises no less than in great it lifts its head. The villager and the village both share it; none is so humble as not to catch the contagion. The State is not out of its reach. It affects men of business, making their step more hurried, their countenance more deeply careworn; it reaches men of speculation, their thoughts circling in madder eddies than before ; it seizes religious men, making them then mere men of religion, or mere religionists, thinking that there is only religion in the world, and time has no duties, save that of escaping out of it. I scarcely need say that this fault is restlessness, a want of calmness and tranquillity. It belongs eminently to our times. There has not been an age since the great flood when men were so restless, so foreign to all spirit of calmness and tranquillity. Man ceases from the labor of to-day only to rush the more eagerly into that of

to-morrow. Be the present field never so pleasing, the eye says, "To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new."

This restless, over-active spirit has not come upon us all at once; it has been long advancing. You may trace its progress with perfect distinctness, rising like a little stream, in distance and obscurity, gradually collecting force from small tributaries until it becomes a mighty stream, leaping and rushing on with scarce the possibility of restraint. In very olden times, the opposite spirit prevailed. Three thousand years ago there was none of this feverish excitement. Enthusiasm like that of our times was quite unknown. The spirit of repose, with his broad wings, hung like manifold night over the face of humanity. Man was cool to his heart; he went forth under the broad sky and in the neighborhood of vast mountains; he sat under the mysterious shade of primitive religion, new in the world, as yet a stranger therein, as it were looking backward and upward to the heaven he seemed to have left. Thus was it with man in the days of Abraham and Moses, and of Babylon. The individual was cared little for, the man was nothing; the State was all. Only great enterprises were undertaken, and these of gigantic greatness never equalled since. Then rose the pyramids; then three millions of Hebrew slaves rose like one man

to cross a desert and settle in a distant land; then conquerors of old assembled their armies, large as whole nations. All was marked with colossal greatness, all conducted with the spirit of tranquillity. Like some vast river, broad and deep, without a ripple, yet with resistless strength, was the march of humanity then.

In the spirit of calmness which marked those ancient times there is much to admire, much which might well be mingled with the more boisterous spirit of these latter days. It is not the sleep of ages, but its repose, which we need. Since man has advanced to his present stage, it should not be that he has lost tranquillity, but has gained enthusiasm.

The spirit of tranquillity is the spirit of strength. This is abundantly shown in the works of Nature. All the great works in the wide world are done without noise or tumult; there is no haste anywhere, though there is no sloth. God's Spirit, everywhere active, is nowhere noisy. All over the world great matters are passing to completeness, there is the mark of resistless power going quietly to its work, never fearing to come short of its object, and so without haste. The earth traverses her course with a mighty speed, yet so quiet withal that the sleeping infant is not disturbed, nor an insect jostled from his perch. Light comes to us with uncounted swiftness, but so tranquilly at the same

time that it ruffles not the air, harms not the soft eyeball of him who welcomes it. All the great works in Nature are gradually and without tumult brought about. Silently and slow the oak comes forth from the dark ground; inch by inch, year after year, century in, century out, it grows silently, while men sleep, till at last it stands a firm pillar, upright and strong. That which has grown up in a moment soon sees an end. If Jonah's gourd grew up in a night, in a night too it perished. Throughout Nature we find that the creative work is all done in calmness; only destruction, and that but rarely, is effected with haste and violence and noise, as the pulling down of a house is always a more noisy work than putting it up. Calmly and slow it is that millions of little creatures are working together on the floor of the ocean and building up new worlds where man shall one day dwell, and cities rise. Thus everywhere in Nature there is tranquillity. True, there are exceptions: the storm convulses the face of the ocean; but it is only its face that is disturbed, the water sleeps calm below and knows no storm. True, clouds shut out the stars; but they are humble clouds, that come not near the lights they hide, and tarry but a brief space. This calmness of Nature is beautiful; it should sink into the heart of man, teaching him a lesson of composure and tranquillity. Thus was it

that holy men of old walked with Nature all their days, composed their spirits in her mysterious presence and drank instruction from the stars, the sun, and trees, and grew calm like them.

This spirit of tranquillity affects likewise great minds. Great men are the calmest of all the children of humanity. True, in their nonage, before experience had somewhat cooled the hot desires of youth, like other men they were impetuous, disturbed; but when their true manhood comes, then are they calm. If we look into the great volume of the chronicles of man, which reveal how much of his high nature he has yet unfolded and lived, we shall find those men who have most of all moulded human destiny, writing their own characters on the coming time, ruling, not over men's bodies, but in their minds, and thus perpetuating their influence till thought shall die out and humanity expire. We shall find that all of these high spirits have been men of tranquillity, — never noisy, obtrusive, impetuous, fearful lest their name be forgotten; for they cared not for self, not trembling lest the great cause of truth in their hands should come to an untimely end, for they knew it was God's cause, and would prevail.

The greatest man of any age is not usually he who is so esteemed in his lifetime. Being by nature noiseless, he shuns mostly those pursuits

which win the admiration of the many who fancy that where there is much smoke there must be a bright fire (though the sun makes none), and think as schoolboys do of the vane upon the steeple, — that what is bright and glittering must needs be golden. The true inspired thinker of his times, he who has in him, most of all men, the spirit of the age, and, seeing farther than the prophetic eye of the general mind, has the principles of the coming age pre-existing in his heart, — he is found in quite other stations. He will often pass unfound by the lauded great men of the day, who are to be forgotten in the next generation. Doubtless, in Paul's time many a man who slumbered at his "long preaching," or passed him unheeded in the street, would have felt degraded if compared with the true inspired apostle. So, too, in Jerusalem Pilate was doubtless deemed greater than Jesus; yet now the Roman only lives as his executioner, while the words of that lowly man, untimely slain, are the words of life to uncounted millions.

The thinker, — no man notices him save perhaps only a few admitted to his holy of holies, whose hearts burn within them while he speaks. His words will be softly whispered in a corner, not from fear, but because *he fears not;* yet in another age his golden words shall be collected and treasured in the minds of a chosen few, — them-

selves the giants of wisdom, only of a lesser stature than their master. They in turn bequeath them to others, till at last they are the common breath of all men, are made permanent in laws and steadfast in institutions. Thus the thoughts of one neglected by his own age and deemed ready to perish, reform all the institutions of a coming age, and go down to the end of time, the most valuable treasure man bequeaths to his children. Thus was it with Moses, thus with Jesus, thus shall it be with all.

Now, how different the case of the unquiet, restless conqueror! The great "man of seeming" is borne on the shoulders of his betters. His name circulates from mouth to mouth; the world follows at his chariot-wheels; and men fancy that his power and influence shall last till "death and night end all." Yet his power, what is it? He is but the servant, the humblest tool, to execute the purpose of some thinker of other times whose lofty idea, formed in profound tranquillity, he carries out with all this selfishness and noise and show. His power, how long shall it last? It is well imaged in "his canvas city of a camp," to-day all loud with life, to-night "all struck and vanished, a few earth-pits and heaps of straw." Thus goes it with the world; the stillest water is the deepest. The most tranquil man is he who will make the

mark on the world which all time shall never erase. There is no empire like thought. The mind that moulded the destinies of to-day stood unnoticed in his tranquil thought two thousand years ago. How calmly now is beating in some obscure recess, all unknown to the world, that heart which shall set the life-pulses all thrilling in the next millennium! Now is the age when thought bears fruit. The king is a feeble man compared to the gifted son of God, the man of heavenly and tranquil genius. Men's actions are governed by moral, not material power; and that is always calm. How noiseless is thought! No rolling of drums, no tramp of squadrons, or immeasurable tumult of baggage-wagons attends its movements. The time may come when Napoleon himself will be better known by his laws than his battles, and the victory of Waterloo prove less momentous than the opening of the first Mechanics' Institute.

True greatness, then, is always calm, tranquil. It is the spirit which is tranquil; only the fleshly passions are impetuous. The good man is calm no less than the great; while the wicked are like the angry sea, which cannot rest.

Let us now give a practical direction to our meditations. If all the great works of Nature are conducted in the spirit of tranquillity, it is for our edification; for the volume of Nature is the first

gospel which, if men read, they would not need the latter, — at least they could not misunderstand it. Nature, then, in her calm spirit reads us the broad lesson, "Be calm." If likewise all the great men of God's peculiar choice, — they who have incarnated the most of omnipotence and lived it out in their lives, — if great minds are calm, is there not a lesson for this man and that, for you and me, and each of us? All Nature crieth for our instruction. Wisdom cries, and understanding utters her voice to all men, and thus she speaks: First, be tranquil in business. Why should a man ever be impetuous, — a reasonable man, I mean? Hath not God given thee enough of time to do thy duty in? Most certainly there is nothing scantily given in the administration of the All-bountiful; but all creatures have enough, and time is surely plentifully bestowed. But even if time were scanty in measure; if you are called to the difficult problem to do the most in the least possible time, — tranquillity is the minister that will lend you the most efficient aid. What unmeasured superiority does the calm man possess in the way of business over the hot and impetuous! The tranquil sees things just as they are, meditates upon them, — for it is only calm water that is capable of reflection, — then calls his energies to the task; the blows falling in the right place, the work is done. The

unquiet man sheds his strength like rain upon the rock, and effects nothing but noise. Thus it is in every work; a calm mind is worth a score of fierce hands going without counsel to work. The merchant, the artist, the husbandman, — all need this gentle spirit of tranquillity, that so "all things may be done decently and in order."

Not less is tranquillity needed in thought than in action. Indeed, calm thought will tranquillize the most rapid action; for tranquillity consists not in slowness, but in self-rule and self-composure; and so the want thereof is manifested not in swiftness, but in hurry and confusion. The calmer a man's thought, the more rapid may his action be. Perhaps there is nothing so much needed at this present time as tranquillity of thought. Men are so used to rapid action of the hands, to labor-saving machinery, that they fancy, or seem to do so, that all composed and careful thought is quite unneeded, "behind the times," as the phrase goes. How rare is it when one's opinion is asked upon any subject, no matter how difficult and deep the subject, nor how untried thereupon the person's mind, — how rare to hear one say, "I should like to think, I cannot make up my mind in a moment"! A man may inherit the gold of his father, but never his wisdom. Perhaps the world is wiser, taken at large, than it was at other times; but every man is born at the

very foot of the ladder of learning, and must win all the way up alone, and only tranquil thought will aid him in this. There is a noisy way of seeking after truth, by talking loudly about it, and decrying those who think differently from one's self. To such seekers truth, which is of no sect or party, gives no answer, shrouding itself in darkness.

But above all is tranquillity needed in all that relates to religion. Haste, violence, are utterly opposed to the calm, noiseless spirit of religion. True religion is always calm and gentle. One does not hear its voice obtrusive in the streets; the bruised reed it breaks not, so gentle is it; the smoking flax it doth not quench, so calm is its spirit of forbearance. In thinking upon religious concerns, let all haste and violence and impetuosity be laid aside; then if at no other time should men be calm. The Comforter who revealeth all needful things, the Spirit of truth, was likewise the Spirit of peace. The Spirit of God, giving power to his Son without measure, came down in the calm likeness of a dove, the symbol of tranquillity. What a beautiful meaning is herein! It shows that the kingdom of heaven is not to be taken by violence, but by gentleness; only for composed souls can there be peace. Well is the highest object we seek called rest for our souls.

In all religious exercises, when piety with open

face looks up to God, and when in the stillness of solitude thou art alone with God, let there be calmness. No fierce swelling of the heart should disturb the clear vision of the soul; no undue passion or haste should impede the power of prayer. It was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, that the Almighty spoke, but in the still small voice. This it is which, far before all pomp and circumstance of worship, rising incense-like out of the deep places of the heart, comes up to God. As it is the still flame which streams highest to heaven, so is it the calm, tranquil spirit of religion which rises highest and soars longest and is most blessed in its flight. It was in calmness that Enoch walked with God; in peace that God took him. In the midst of temptation and abuse and danger stands Jesus. Enemies assault, yet the same unaltered calmness endures. Death approaches in most frightful shape, yet his calm spirit says, "I am not alone;" and the angel of beautiful tranquillity comes down to aid, and wipe the death-sweat from off that throbbing brow. Thus, Christians, shall it be with you and me. The most tranquil force is always the mightiest. We too shall have temptation, danger, and abuse; but for us that same calmness will come if we, like Jesus, seek for it. For us likewise there is the day of doom. Behind us we must leave the shining city of life, must stand beside the last

watch-fire of time, with visible darkness stretching out before; but even then, if rightly we use our gifts, shall calmness whisper words of peace, and our eye rest upon brighter worlds, fair shining in their exceeding tranquillity, in the life we go to meet.

When the ark had long floated upon the waters, and the deluge had finished the work of the Almighty, he called upon his angels to go down and cause the waters to abate from off the face of the earth, and the fair verdure to return thereto. The angel of violence exclaimed, "Send me;" and all replied, "He is most fit for such a mission, demanding a rude and fierce spirit." And so the angel of violence went down. He called together the winds to sweep the waters from the earth. The storm howled. Up rolled the frantic waters, in mad waves. Fitfully the storm-clouds rushed together. Lightning glared wildly, the deep thunder chiming awful in. But not a drop of water disappeared; even the long-tried ark had like to founder. Weary with this confusion, the angel of violence soon went back; and the Almighty sent down the spirit of calmness. Slowly the angel came down on his dove-like pinions, the olive branch in his hand, love smiling out of his eyes, peace enlightening his face. At a single wave of his olive branch the storm lulled away into a low murmur of peace. The loud chiming of the

waves became a gentle ripple. Softly the sun came forth; and on the bosom of the retreating cloud shone the rainbow of promise, the fair token of hope, the emblem that tranquillity shall ever prevail. The ark rested, and the delivered came forth, singing, "Blessed be God, and the strong spirit of tranquillity; the meekest is ever the mightiest."

1837.

IV.

THE WORLD BELONGS TO EACH MAN.

All things are yours. — 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

THE design of the apostle was to tell his Corinthian friends that if they worked according to the law of God they need not depend upon particular teachers, places, or possessions for instruction or for happiness; for all things in this world, all in the world to come, were theirs. The *world*, the whole mass and body of men, will be your teachers, — not Paul and Cephas alone. You will gain instruction from all. *Life* with all its trials will be a blessing. Death will be your victory and time of rejoicing. Things present and things to come, — that is, all the goods of this world, its objects grand and beautiful, its health, its honors, — all are yours. Your instructors, your benefactors, and the whole of the world to come, shall in like manner be yours. In a word, all *things* will be yours; and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Thus the soul made perfect might be likened to a building of which God was the architect and Christianity the foundation; the world, its wealth and

pleasures, its afflictions and trials, the subordinate workmen; faith, hope, and love, the pillars.

The doctrine of this discourse, then, is that all things in the world belong to every man who can use them. All are made for each. Man has various desires, and all can find satisfaction. The senses have wants; food and raiment are supplied. There are objects of wonder for the fancy, for the world is sown with wonders. For the understanding there are subjects of thought without number. There is truth for the reason, love for the affections, and God for the soul. Each man may possess all of these, and yet exclude no other man. He that has eyes may enjoy all that is beautiful; he that can hear may share all that is melodious. So far as he enjoys it, it is *his*, in the true and proper sense of possession. One man has a fine house; he has gay garments and costly carriages; he has broad and beautiful lands, ships to the East and West. He calls them his property, and so they are, but not exclusively his. All that can see them have a property therein; the passer in the street may call them his when he rejoices in their beauty. Nay, it often happens that he who possesses the legal title to call them his has in reality the smallest property in them. A blind man cannot say the beautiful pastures he owns are his, for he never enjoys them; much rather do they really belong to

the cattle that graze therein, to the birds which sing amid the flowers, to the passer-by who rejoices in their beauty and freshness. The unenjoying owner is rather their keeper than their possessor.

The same may be said of all other possessions which are not hoarded in secret. He who distresses himself in his extreme thirst for gold, and delights to display his riches to the public eye in sumptuous buildings, in beautiful apparel, while he is racked with the care of these things, possesses less of real wealth than the poorest of the public who admires the show and rejoices in it. The ship of the merchant doth no less rejoice the unconcerned spectator when he sees its strength, its beauty, as it walks the waters like a thing of life, than the lawful owner thereof. The one has all the pleasure and none of the pain and anxiety.

Yet many there are who envy the so-called *owners* of these treasures. All will admire the beautiful wings, the many-colored dress, of the butterfly, but no one envies the dazzling insect. Why can we not rejoice equally in the gay and costly raiment which others wear? Joseph had a coat of many colors. Why should not all his brothers render themselves happy by admiring the pretty show? One arrays herself in costly jewels; but has she an exclusive property in her shining treasure? All eyes are gladdened by their lustre.

The wearer in reality sees less of the splendor than the unconcerned onlooker. Why should one envy another the privilege of pleasing the public eye? As well might we envy the glow-worm his light, or the firefly his dazzling radiance. One man has built him a costly dwelling. Science has planned, art has erected it with consummate skill, and taste has adorned it with exquisite niceness. All men who see it may enjoy it with him whose name it bears. Why should that enjoyment be cut short by envy of him who affords it? We look on the curious winding of a shell; we admire its many colors, where the crimson and the sapphire unite; we wonder at its shape; we joy in its beauty; but who thinks of envying the snail whose house it is?

The same remarks will apply to almost every article of property on which the public eye rests. He who is a true and sound man in the city rejoices at the bales of goods he sees in the streets, in the great ships that bring us the fruits of other lands, in the wealth of the warehouse, in the splendor of the buildings, without dreaming of the ownership. In the country he may admire the beautiful landscape before him, — the cattle in the field, the trees in the orchard, the brooks in the meadows, the farmhouse which man has built, the flowers and corn he has planted, — asking no question as to the legal owners thereof. He may

say, All these are mine. Indeed, all things belong to him who has a sense to perceive them and a human heart to feel. The rose in the garden wafts its fragrance to the boy in the street; it is as grateful to him as to the man in whose garden it grows. A contented heart is a continual feast. To him who possesses this and open senses to enjoy, all things belong. For him the merchant sends his ships afar; for him the artist toils with busy hand; for him avarice lays up its stores, and grandeur exhibits its magnificence; for him Jezebel tires her head, adorns her face, and arrays her in jewels; for him are groves planted and fair houses built. The breath of morn, the rising sweet with song of earliest bird, the crimson twilight, are his, and he enjoys them. The strength of noonday is his. The sober majesty of evening, the awful solemnity of night, all are his.

Now, every man may possess all these treasures on one condition, — that he is not selfish. When he looks round on all these objects, he may rejoice in them so long as he enjoys them without thinking of himself; but the moment he says, "This inch of ground is mine, but that large domain is my neighbor's, would that were mine also!" he has destroyed his enjoyment therein. He wishes to possess exclusively, and loses all which he really had. Repining takes the place of pleasure; want, of satisfaction.

The man is moody and discontented; he has lost much in his desire for *more*, as two kings in their passion for universal empire have lost their true dominion.

When Adam and Eve were formed, they stood alone in the world. Around them was the earth; it was all theirs; its mountains, its rivers, its plains, its little flowers, all were theirs. Above them was the unclouded heavens. The winds blew; the sun shone; the far stars glittered in their pure light. All was theirs. Was Adam richer than all his tribe? Not so. Each man of us has an inheritance as broad. There is the same heaven and the same earth; and it is all yours, as all was Adam's. It ministers to your senses, it gladdens your heart if you are wise and contented. You will not envy the property of the wealthy, for you are richer than he if you can enjoy more of his possessions than he himself. "Give me health and a day," says one, "and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous."

"For us the winds do blow,
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow.
Nothing we see but means our good,
As our delight or as our treasure;
The whole is either our cupboard of food
Or cabinet of pleasure.

"More servants wait on Man
Than he'll take notice of: in every path

He treads down that which doth befriend him,
When sickness makes him pale and wan.
O mighty love! Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him." [1]

But if a man is selfish and desires to exclude others, he loses his own inheritance. He would enlarge, and he limits; he would debar others, and he shuts out himself. Instead of rejoicing in all things, he takes no pleasure out of his own estates; his *own* possessions are barren, little, and low, yet he counts them better than all the world besides. The true man has ownership of the sun; the selfish possesses only his own candle. The true man sees a brother everywhere, though in rags; but the selfish has no kindred out of his own class. He was born the heir of all, but he has sold his birthright. Not satisfied with just possessions in all, he would shut out others, and so he has lost the best of his patrimony. A miser was once offered his hands full of a precious liquid; to gain much, he opened wide his fingers and lost all. The world is full of such misers. What man among you is rich in this world's goods? He who has most money, broadest lands, costliest houses, richest food and raiment? No; but he who has active senses, a sound mind in a sound body, a vigorous understanding, and, above all, a clean conscience and a contented and right-

[1] HERBERT: *Man.*

eous heart. He is the truly rich in this world's goods, and he has the kingdom of heaven and all things added to him. All the world is his. It teaches him; it affords him gratification. Not Paul, Apollos, and Cephas alone, but all men are his, to instruct and to bless him. For him is virtue; for him is religion; for him is life, death, heaven, God.

All things are yours if you are wise. How much does the wise man see to enjoy, to be grateful for! The same world is unrolled before all men. The same measureless heaven overarches the wise and the unwise, Solomon and the beast he rides. What do different men see therein? Each sees out of him what he has within him. The wise sees much and enjoys much; the careless and the foolish see little and enjoy little. There is an old proverb, "He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry out the wealth of the Indies."

All things are yours on condition that you know how to use them. The gates will only open to him who has the magic word. The wise man makes affliction his teacher by bearing it calmly. He conquers sorrow by enduring it; he overcomes in the battle of life by Christian submission. If the outward things will not yield to his will, as to that of the strong man, he yields to them like the weak man, and is thereby the victor. Disappointment is his Apollos to teach resignation, success his Cephas

to impart his enthusiasm. Sorrow and stern experience, but mingled with hopeful greetings, are his Paul to teach him brave self-denial, unfailing faith, and love which casts out fear. Things present are his ministers, in a glowing or a joyous face. Things past are his teachers; for experience reveals herself to his eyes and he learns wisdom by his failures, as the giants of old were the strongest when they fell. Death is his, for he has taken away its sting; the grave is his, for he has taken from it the victory.

To possess the world, we must be good. All things are yours not only on the condition that you are not selfish, but wise and good also. A man always finds the world reflects his own feelings. To a man in a happy frame of mind, the very heavens seem to laugh; all Nature wears a smile. To a man in sorrow, all appears melancholy. If he is peevish, all things seem to conspire to vex him. Is he in deep affliction? His mind will hang the heavens in dim eclipse.

> "The clouds that gather round the setting sun
> Do take a sober coloring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."

Nature and society always wear the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under a calamity, the heat of his own fire hath a sadness in it.

The good man and the bad live, it is true, in the same world; but since each man as it were creates the world for himself in his own image, the world which the good man calls *his* is vastly different from all that the selfish, foolish, or wicked man sees. A vain man, filled with egregious love of himself, finds all things either flattering him, and then he is pleased, or neglecting him, and then he is offended and is out of humor with his fellow-men. A selfish man mingles in society, in business, in labor with other men; he gains nothing but self-love. But let a man go forth, forgetting as it were himself and caring somewhat for other men, he gains immeasurably; he finds encouragement for his goodness, and he finds his reward. His goodness enlarges; his whole being expands.

The apostle makes an application of these truths, "Therefore let no man glory in men." If all things, past, present, and to come, are yours, then how foolish to glory in another man; to chain your mind to his, to think just as he thinks, feel just as he feels, and act as he commands! Paul advises his followers not to follow Cephas or Apollos, but Christ; that is, not to rely exclusively on the words of these teachers, but to think for themselves, to gather their belief from Jesus himself. Paul goes still farther and exhorts them not to follow him any farther than he follows

Christ. He would have them follow what they pronounce right. A man is to determine *for himself* what is *true*, what is *good*, what is *holy;* then will his service be a reasonable service. No man can judge for another. We are not to depend on another for aid; for since the world is before us, we are to labor for ourselves, to bear what is needful. We are not to depend on another for doctrine, to the exclusion of our own judgment. Try, examine, all the world of opinion, — Paul, Cephas, and Apollos, — but hold fast only to that which is the truth in Christianity. It is an advantage to hear the opinions of a wise man, but if they are to be taken for *commands*, it is a serious evil. A good and wise man will be taught by one wiser than himself, not by his dictation, but by his suggestions; he will not be commanded, but inspired. The thoughts of one wiser than yourself are not to be placed in your mind, as bales of goods are trundled from warehouse to warehouse. Rather are they seeds, which you receive; they will shoot forth in your mind and heart. In this they have a vigorous, in that a frail growth. They will thrive by care and perish by neglect. Men should listen to the words of the wise, should read them in the sacred word, and then follow what is right. No man, no number of men, can say to your conscience, "Thus far and no farther." All are

yours. Your own conscience is never to be humbled before all the advice of all the world. You are not to depend on another for religious truth. Reproduce religion in your own heart. The world looks dark to some eyes; Providence is a mystery to them; the Bible a sealed book; they know not Jesus; they do not understand Paul. But let them reproduce in their minds the thoughts of the apostles, the feeling of the Saviour, and light comes upon them. The veil is lifted from the world, the mystery removed from Providence, the seal is broken, and the book opened. It is then the book of life. The preaching of Paul, Cephas, and Apollos, nay, of Jesus, is but a foolishness or a stumbling-block, without their reproducing the religious sentiment within their own hearts. But with this, it is the power of life unto life. Any man is a Christian just so far as he reproduces the Christian spirit in his soul.

If all are yours, be ashamed to neglect your inheritance; be afraid to abuse it. The body is not alone to be cared for, but the soul. Not only are the senses to be pleased, but the conscience is to be obeyed, the affections nurtured, the religious sentiment cultivated. Life is to be wisely lived, its duties done, its pleasures enjoyed. Every one should say to himself, I will be the man; I will make my own inner world. What is any man that

is good which you cannot be? Was Abraham more faithful, Moses more meek than you can be? Is Solomon wiser, Paul more earnest, or John more holy than you can be? Surely not. All their goodness is but an example for you. Do you admire their virtue, exult in their largeness of heart? Why, then, are you vicious, self-indulgent, and belittled? The earth does not now produce different men from those of old time. Two or three men have not exhausted humanity. The brightest lights may not yet have shone. Be, then, ashamed of your littleness, of your small attainment in wisdom of the heart, in self-command, in devotion, in holiness of life. Set a lofty end before you to be attained. Let nothing short of perfect justice, truth, and holiness satisfy you. Then shall all things minister unto you. Your actual every-day life shall be the road to perfection; and your thoughts, hopes, wishes, feeling, shall be to you a ladder reaching to heaven, where angels ascend to carry prayers and descend to bring God's blessing and inspiration.

1838.

V.

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION UPON THE FEELINGS.

The fear of the Lord maketh a merry heart, and giveth joy and gladness and a long life. — ECCLESIASTICUS i. 12.

RELIGION appears on the earth in two legitimate forms, — that of a principle and that of a sentiment. Both are the results of instincts in our nature which naturally lead to and develop the one or the other. The principle of religion comes from conscience, or the moral sense, by which we feel obliged to do what is right and avoid what is wrong. The sentiment of religion comes from that somewhat in our nature which the Scriptures call faith, or which in common speech we call love of what is right, good, true, and lovely, — in a word, love of God. Religion then appears in one or other of these forms, according as the sense of duty alone or the love of what is right is brought out and made active in us. A few words may be said on each of these points, — the principle and the sentiment.

First, of the action of the principle of religion. It commands us whether we will or not. The sense of duty obliges us to do the acts it commands, not by taking away our freedom, it is true, but by saying with all the authority of God, "Thou oughtest to do this, thou must, thou shalt do it." Here the loveliness of virtue and a divine life, the ugliness of sin and a mean, wicked life, are not shown. This only is set forth: one must be embraced, the other repelled. Of course no appeal is made to the affections; there is nothing to charm us. We have the strength of the law, not the beauty of the gospel. Here the will is brought into action, and made to do the work of the whole man; the spontaneous feelings of reverence, love, admiration, come not forward into action, but all goodness is self-denial. With most men of cold rational temperament, like ourselves, this is the first step in religion. They see the moral law written in their nature; they learn that all this life of ours is a commentary upon that law; for the footprints of justice are wide and deep, in all the highways and bypaths of mortal life. If a man does a good deed, justice never gives up the search till she drops the recompense into his bosom. If he does wrong, vengeance never sleeps, but follows the man like a ghost, close as his shadow, till she overtakes him. There is no escaping God. The sinner knows that he is pursued of justice.

> "Like one that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And having once turned round
> Moves not again his head,
> Because he knows an ugly fiend
> Doth close behind him tread,"

so he goes on his toilsome way. Now, there are many who pass for respectable and honest men, nay, who flatter themselves they are religious men, and would take sorely to heart any charge which made doubtful their right to a Christian name, — a whole page in the book of life, — whose religion is simply this: obedience to a law which they dislike because it lessens their gains, increases their charities, puts a yoke on their animal appetites, and stimulates them to self-denial. It is obedience to a law they would avoid if it were possible; for if a man admits not the excellence of a law, why should he obey it? Only because some exterior consideration compels him, either by law or terror. His obedience then is constrained either by fear of some personal evil or by the direct action of the sense of duty. He does what he feels he ought to do, though he does not love to do it. No doubt the man is blessed by obeying duty rather than the loose appetite which chances to be uppermost at the moment; but still it is a very uncomfortable position, to wish one way and walk another. We

might say the man was like one seated and bound upright on a horse, with his back toward the beast's head, looking one way and riding the other.

Such certainly is the case with many respectable men. They seem bound unwillingly on the back of swift-moving duty to ride backward, not seeing whither they go, with all their wishes, appetites, hopes, and sincere prayers tending in the direction exactly opposite to that in which themselves are borne; and not only this, but they mock at such as look forward. We see frequent examples of this doubleness of action in men and women. Such instances swarm in those churches where duty is preached more than love; where fear is extravagantly appealed to, and made the master passion; where the selfish passions are by no means put down, only called by bad names, condemned like Samson, blind and hungry in his prison-house, to work in darkness, and at the mill of their enemies. You see this whole story written on the faces of such men; for a sagacious man can read your creed in your face as easily as in your catechism. All strong emotions write themselves out on the face; so that seeing a friend after years' absence, you see what he is and what he has been doing. And religion, the very strongest of all emotions in most men, shows very quickly what form it takes,

whether it charms the man by love, or drives him with the knout of fear. Persons constrained to outside righteousness by the sense of duty alone, or worse, by fear, have just enough of religion to make them afraid. They are hanging in suspense between heaven and hell; they are not wholly dead, not quite alive. They need more religion to make them cheerful. Their heaven is all on the other side of the grave; it should begin here, at least in the heart. They are perpetually in fear of hell, when they have been in it all their life long.

Now, it were natural to suppose if religion were in conformity with the laws of our nature, or more especially in conformity with the higher laws of our higher nature, and thus in union with God, that the more we had thereof, the more cheerful we should be, the more happy, the more blessed. Our heaven would then begin as our religion began; it would go on with it; and our cheerfulness would be as apparent as the squirrels', and our blessedness seen as easily and as often as our face. This is the result of the true service. But to bring it about, *you must love what you serve;* you must see the excellence of the law which you obey, or else your obedience may be a curse, and certainly is quite an inferior blessing. You must obey *freely*, because you understand and prefer it; you must obey joyfully, because you love it, or it does you little good.

So far as the principle goes, it does not touch the heart, only the conscience. It does not end the discord between conflicting passions, between hope and fear, appetite and duty. Man is not in love with religion, it is a master who commands his servile obedience, though for his good. It is not a bride whom he loves, and whom it is his pleasure to serve, and his repose to work for, and his self-respect to do homage unto. Since this is so, the man in this state seeks as much as possible to avoid religious acts. By this I do not mean rites, forms, and ceremonies, but good words, cheerful looks, and benevolent actions, — in short, a divine life. His design is to do the least of all this, and at the same time to quiet conscience. His formula is, the minimum of charity and self-denial; the maximum of selfishness and indulgence, — in short, to care the least for others and the most for self that conscience will allow.

Then he sometimes contrives to cheat his conscience also, so the quality of goodness is diminished still farther. He is to purchase his salvation, he thinks, by giving up certain things he loves and doing certain things he hates, so he makes the best bargain he can, and does not cease to love the vice he avoids or hate the virtue he is obliged to practise. Hence it comes to pass that persons called religious are often no better than others; their

benevolent deeds are done from selfish motives. As neighbors, sons, husbands, fathers, daughters, and wives, they are no better than others not called religious. They are stern and austere; you may admire, but you cannot love them. Examine the outward actions of a man of religious principle alone, by the rule and plummet, and suppose him true to this so far as he goes, you will perhaps find nothing to condemn or censure in the acts themselves, tried by this standard, but you will find a hardness, a cold-heartedness, in all of them. They do not render religion lovely. Such men have brought a scandal upon religion, so that some fancy it is dark and gloomy, clothing the face in weeds of weeping; that it forbids amusement, gayety, and light-hearted joy; that it sits among the tombstones, crying and cutting itself with stones. No wonder that young men and women, no wonder all not forced by extremity of outward sorrow, turn away with anguish and in bitterness of disappointment, saying, "If this be religion, give us none of it; or if we must receive it, let it be put off till old age, that as we leave this world, we may take in our hand this staff, which may aid us hereafter, but which would overthrow us here." The reason of this is that these men of religious principle only have but taken the first step; they are at the gate of Eden, amid the destroying and forbidding angels; they have not en-

tered the garden, nor tasted the tree of life, nor met the angel of welcome. It is as unfair to judge religion by these men as it would be to judge of literature by seeing some awkward schoolboy in the agony of learning the alphabet, rather than by listening to the golden words some eloquent scholar pours forth on his mount of inspiration, or the incense-cloud of music some poet sends up from his altar of fire.

So far as men of this stamp of character go, they do not fulfil the text, and religion does not make their hearts merry nor give them joy or gladness. They hope it will give them eternal life, but surely they do not have the earnest of it now. Such is the general aspect of Christians in the length and breadth of our churches; there are not many who really love Christianity and a divine life as they love gain and trade. This Christianity does not affect their hearts and make them more manly and better; and with them what is called a change of heart is a change for the worse, because a man thinks he has the whole of religion, and stops in the porch of duty, never feels the light within the temple, nor suns himself in the warmth of love.

Now, to go a step farther, religion affects the heart and feelings just as it affects the mind and the conscience. It leads to "a merry heart and joy and gladness," and real life of the best things

in man. It gives tranquillity, or what the Sacred Scriptures call rest for the soul. What is the heart without religion? It is a union of conflicting desires, each good in itself, but all easily running to confusion, unless there be some master-spirit to assign each its place and duty. It is like a band of musicians with instruments well attuned, but each playing on his own account, and no two attempting the same strain; the result of this torrent of melodious notes is not harmony, but discord. Religion comes among them; they all play stoutly as before, but under her guidance and in concert, and a cloud of harmony goes up to God to bless men while it lingers here. He then loves as a bride what before he served as a master. His love casts out fear. He would not do otherwise than obey the law of God. He is not disturbed by doubts of the present, still less by fears for the future. If his affairs go well, he rejoices in his success; but if adversity overtake him with all his carefulness and obedience, — adversity which prudence could not foresee or care prevent, — he rejoices in that also with a merry heart. Out of the hard marble of life, the deposition of a few joys and many sorrows, of birth and death, smiles and tears, he hews him, without effort, the beautiful statue of religious tranquillity; it stands always beside him with its smile of heavenly satisfaction.

Without religion in the heart we seize the most fleeting things and count them as permanent; and when they crumble to dust in our hands, we wonder that we are deceived! We had looked on success in our calling, the life of our friends, the health of our bodies, as the sovereign good; but these all disappear. Alas for us, we cannot live well for this world unless made for much more than this world!

When one worships in the midst of us, young and beautiful and strong as the soundest, and a day after leaves her friends mourning round the place she has left vacant; when we consider that the same affliction may befall any family at any time; nay, that the next that is taken may be your sister, your husband, your child, yourself, — a sad feeling of insecurity comes over us. Not that we fear ourselves to die, — death is far less fearful than life, — but to live without those dearest to the heart, or to die and leave them to their sad lot. It is this which the heart without religion never can endure. Your mind and conscience cannot solve the difficulty; they cannot alone give you the peace you ask. You need the religious heart; the will which asks nothing adverse to the will of God; the absolute trust in God, which is greater than all hope. Our best affections turn sorrowfully away from things that perish, and cry with groans not

fully uttered, "Oh, give us something lasting, that is always the same, that we may cling round it forever and ever!" The heart's religion gives you that something; it tells you that what is best never dies, never even changes; it tells you to see God, love him, love him through your friends while here, love him with nothing between you and him when they are gone. Do not ask particular things, wealth or poverty, sickness or health; do your duty, and take what comes. Work for what God wishes, and your joy is achieved and your peace perfect. Without, there may be struggles, darkness, storms, but the house is all beautiful and tranquil within. The winds and the storms beat on that house, but it falls not. All men are seeking for this rest of soul, this tranquillity of repose. As the little lake of life is tossed into tumult, worldly men call on their gods, — on wealth, on pride, on their own strong will, — "Stay us this tempest; bring us to the land; give us peace!" But, alas! it will not be. The wail of the chilling storm is as wild as ever, and waxes still louder; and the sea of sorrow swells more tempestuous. Meantime religion sleeps on its pillow and knows nothing of the storm. For those who in weakness go to this true deliverer and say, "Lord, save us, or we perish," that sweet spirit rises with heaven in its look, and deliverance in its hand, and the waves are still, the

tossed bark is at the shore. Well may we say, "The winds and the sea obey it." For what are the swellings of the Atlantic to the restless anguish of a disturbed heart? What the wailing of the storm to the agony of doubt, distress, remorse for the past, and fear for the future? There is no calmness so serene, no peace so deep, as religious tranquillity; it works the transfiguration of the man. He who knows it not by his inward experience can be told nothing of it by all our words; but whoso has felt it knows that words like a prophet's speech cannot image forth the starry deeps of its serene delight. All the world is seeking for this tranquillity. Why will men so disquiet themselves about petty things of no concern to any, least to themselves, and leave this great reality all untouched, never turn aside to see this great sight and enjoy the highest gift God can bestow on man? This religious tranquillity is the birthright of you, my fellow-sinner, and each of us; it falls like manna from heaven, they may gather who will. Yet who has it? There runs a story of religious tranquillity to this effect.

Nathan ben Elim was a poor basket-maker at Bagdad, with a limping foot and a single eye. Dwelling in a dirty lane, the poorest of the destitute, he won a scanty bread for himself, his sickly wife, and decrepit father. Early and late was Na-

than at his toil. His frame was bent by labor; his face seamed by want. Poverty and much distress were writ on all around him. Yet his face was a sunbeam; and the song of cheerfulness ever went up from his lips as he brought or carried his light wares on his head for sale. Mahomet, the servant of God, had often met Nathan in the bazaar; he was struck with the cheerful repose that smiled out of his rent garments, and made poverty respectable. One day he sought the poor basket-maker as he sat in the only room of his house, and wove his rushes, intending to give alms to a man so deserving. "What makes thee so happy?" said the unrecognized prophet. "Thou art poor and ignorant and often sick; yet thy face is like Gabriel's. Tell me the art to be blessed." "Stranger," said the basket-maker, "thou talkest like a silly woman. I have but one eye, but he that has none may see how to be blessed. Why should not I be happy? True, I have suffering enough and poverty; true, my five children have died all before me, the last but forty days ago, slain by ruffians. True, my work is hard, and my wife a shrew whom Job and Moses and Solomon could not suffer, nor Gabriel tame with a beam of gentleness. Still, why should not I be blessed? Three things only make up my peace: to be what God pleases, though poor and lame and blind; to do, though hungry and bare, my daily

duties without distrust; and to have a good religious heart. A baby could have told you this." The prophet said, "I came to relieve thee, and am now blessed by thy sickness. I have been up to the seventh heaven, but thou hast seen God;" and he fell down and kissed Nathan's feet, calling him "wisest and greatest and most favored of the sons of men."

1840.

VI.

THE APPLICATION OF RELIGION TO LIFE.

I will shew thee my faith by my works. — JAMES ii. 18.

THE good apostle means, I will show you my religion by my life. Your attention is asked to a sermon on the application of religion to life. This principle may be laid down as not likely to be called in question by a sane man; namely, that a thing is of no value unless it serve some purpose or can serve some purpose. At least the apostle was of this opinion. He thought the end of religion was its application to life; and unless it was thus applied, he doubted if the religion itself existed, knowing that it is not natural for man to believe one way and live another way. Now, if religion in general may be applied to life, the Christian religion especially is capable of this application, for it grew out of the divine life of a man, and was evidently lived before it was believed. Christianity by common consent has been called the best of all religions. If it deserve that name, it must have a

direct and powerful influence on life. We affect to embrace this best of all religions. It has become part of our common law. Its name is everywhere among us. Yet how much better is our life than that of the Mahometan, the Pagan? Take away the somewhat of refinement that comes from our superior intellectual culture, and how much are we better than they? The demand of Christianity is heavenly-mindedness while you live on earth; to do all for the glory of God; to love your neighbor as yourself, — which in plain English means, enjoy nothing from which you would improperly debar your neighbor; love God with your whole heart; are you strong in mind, soul, body, affections, health, — thank God and help men who are weak in respect to these. This is the Christian standard of life. Yet high as this standard is, our life, it is confessed on all hands, is little better than that of the heathen. The reason is plain. We have made a separation between religion and life, between faith and works; or rather we do not attempt to apply religion in all respects to life, or wish to do so. It is not a common rule with men to apply Christianity to all things with which they have to do. It is not so common that men are false to their real principles as it is that the principle is wrong. While they are busy in trading, their religion remains quietly at home, or in the church, it may be,

where they left it last Sunday. It may be their Christianity "is talking or is pursuing a journey, or peradventure it sleepeth and must needs be awaked." The cause of all this is plain. Many men do not wish to apply religion to life; for if they did, their religion would go with them everywhere, and be found in the counting-room as well as the church, and would hardly require the Sunday bell to waken it weekly from dull repose.

Now, there are three ways in which religion may be applied to life, — individually, socially, and politically; that is, by men acting independently, each for himself, by men acting in large bodies, and by men acting in nations. This seems to have been the natural and historical order in which Christianity came and grew up. First, it was the life of Jesus, dwelling in one single heart and shown forth in his action. Next, it lighted up the soul of a small number, — the real disciples, James, John, and Peter, and warm-hearted women, who seem to have anticipated even John and Peter, and to have soared above their heads far away into the heaven of Christianity. Next, from this small body it spread to larger numbers, and was last embraced by the State and by whole nations; but just in proportion as it spread wide, it became shallow. The disciples, even John and Paul, felt it not as Jesus did; they did not so fully apply it to life. Nor did the large

bodies, the nations, feel it a thousandth part so much as those flaming apostles. Had this been so, the work had been all done, and you and I had been born not to wail over the misery and sin wherewith life is crowded full, or to seek to stay the whelming tide, or lift our own heads above it; we should have been born to better bliss than we fancy that Adam experienced in the fable, before the fall.

But Christianity is not applied to life extensively in these three relations, politically, socially, or individually. By applying it politically is meant, in the intercourse of nation with nation, or in the action of the nation's laws upon the people themselves; socially, by the various societies and bodies of men that exist for certain purposes not political; individually, by each man acting for himself, in his own way.

First, it may be taken for granted that attempts are very rarely made to make a political application of Christianity to life. One needs but half an eye to be convinced of this fact. But if all nations would make a thorough application thereof, it would work a change hitherto without precedent in the affairs of man. How many institutions would go at once to the ground! How would armed fleets be heard of no more! and castles and forsaken forts and barricaded walls would stand like the

pyramids, looking foolish enough, — monuments of barbarism passed away and of savagery forgot. Brazen-mouthed cannons, which sacrilegious hands have formed from church bells, would be transformed anew, and would call men, not to war and murder, but to peace and love once more. Arsenals would be changed into barns; and blameless sheep and oxen might find their cribs where stands of arms now press the ground. Soldiers who, in every land but our own, affront the sun with red coats and gilt epaulets, the "bravery of their tinkling ornaments," would go back to the honorable work of tilling the soil and bearing with ready and clean hands the great burden of society. Not only this, but national governments would become very simple affairs, and would perhaps consist of a few clerks at the Capitol, with a moderate salary, whose office would be to keep the books of the nations and do the honors of the place to strangers, and reciprocate the good feeling of the similar clerks in other nations, and so keep up a good understanding the world over. Then, instead of an army of office-holders, greedy to keep their station, and a larger army of office-wanters greedy to get a situation, each man might attend to his own business. Thus being free from idle or unprofitable hands, there would be no empty mouths nor backs unclothed, still less any man crippled by toil and shortened

of half his days by excessive work, while another swelled into gouty luxuriance and died of inaction. Men say this cannot be done now; that Christianity cannot be applied politically as yet, because all the nations would not agree to it, and if one alone made the experiment, that undefended nation would be but a dove amid a thousand hawks. No doubt there is some truth in this remark. A religious nation in a world of irreligious nations would be like a Christian man among knaves in common life, — mocked at, imposed upon, and occasionally plundered. Yet if each man had waited until all his neighbors were religious before he gave in his adhesion to Christianity, the world had been Pagan as a race till this day.

The world has seen very few attempts to make a political application of religion to life. One was the well-known case of the good Quaker, William Penn. Here it was made under circumstances the most disadvantageous, — made with bloody savages. Yet what was the result? The Quaker and the savage lived together in peace. One drop of Quaker blood never reddened the Indian's knife. The treaty he made with the naked savages, as Voltaire has said with righteous sarcasm, was the only treaty ever made between Christian and savage without an oath, and the only one ever kept. He might have added, the only one the Christian ever

meant to keep longer than it was convenient. No one knows how it would turn out if any one nation were to make the experiment. Government is not designed to promote the growth of goodness and religion, nor can it be; it is mainly concerned with physical things. The object of political action is limited to two things; namely, to prevent crime, and to prevent poverty. But these evils can only be prevented by a close adherence to God's law; in other words, by the political application of religion to life. Whence come the evils that disturb even our own nation? Because we have forsaken the natural law of God. Whence come the evils so deep and dreadful that oppress like an incubus the old nations of the world? Alas! from the same cause, — from centuries of disobedience, from ages of folly, ages of crime. The misery of society is always but the handwriting on the wall: "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting."

Again, extensive attempts are not made to apply religion to life socially, though perhaps we do more in this respect than other nations. We are so accustomed to its evils that we do not think of them. We do not look on almshouses and asylums, and ask how men are become poor in a civilized land, in a Christian land, while more suffer from want than among savages. We do not look on our jails and ask why its inmates are there, and

what circumstances forced them to crime. We do not look on the fact that seventeen men out of the score have the fear of poverty before them all their life, while God made enough and to spare for the whole world. We do not consider that three fourths of men and women, as things now are, toil of necessity so large a portion of their time that nothing is left for improvement, — absolutely nothing for intellectual improvement. This state of things is so common that men look on it as natural, as a law of God, — as if labor, which God meant for each, should hinder improvement in mind, growth in stature, which God meant for all. It is a good thing no doubt that one man in the thousand should have a masterly education, sufficient to bring out what is in him, and revive in him the image and likeness of God; but it is a crying shame and a burning sin that all should not have the same, and be all that their natures would allow them to be. It were a sad thing that one man in a hundred should be born into the world capable of intellectual and æsthetic cultivation, and die out of it without a chance to refine his taste, to educate his understanding, and improve and ripen his whole mind. But what shall we say when such is the lot of the great majority of men, — a condition so hard that no legislature bewails it, and few prayers go up to God that it may be made better?

Alas! we must say that the social application of religion to life has yet but begun to begin. We talk of the rush of time; it scarcely begins to creep, though doubtless it will at last run and be glorified. If religion were thus applied to life, we should nip crime in the bud. Instead of a jail to punish a criminal and make him worse by the vengeance society takes on him, we should take him by the hand, and while restraining his iniquity, should extricate him from those circumstances which would have made you or me equal criminals had they fallen to our lot. We should open his eyes, and appeal to what is left of goodness in him, and then try to uplift the fallen man, and never give over till the last sand ran out. The schoolmaster and moral teacher would take the place of the constable. How few and simple would our laws become! Life would be as fair as it was in Eden. Labor would be easy and natural; one man would not be crushed by its fearful excess, nor another pampered by indulgence purchased at another's toil. Still less would any labor, however hard or however revolting, be looked upon as degrading or menial or servile. There would no doubt exist the eternal distinction of strong and weak, active and indolent, rich and poor; but they would shade each into each, like the light of the rainbow, — a broad and sevenfold beam of light.

Then the grand effort of all would be to promote the welfare of each, to render all comfortable. This is one object, the earthly end of religion, — to make this world a better place, to cast out the devils from it, to sweep and garnish this earthly house. Yet it is commonly thought religion is only for the next life, — that the kingdom of heaven must never come on the earth; and so men do not wish to embark in an enterprise where the returns are so slow to come, and come only in the next world. But it is not so. Religion makes heaven here, for there is a mighty meaning in the Saviour's word: "Seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It means keep God's law, and the evils of society will vanish; you shall have all you need for the best of purposes. If attempts were made to bring this about, what a change would take place in social affairs! Who would accept a monopoly, or take a privilege, or do anything to the disadvantage of his fellow-man?

We see in our day various attempts to apply Christianity to life. Temperance societies would apply it to diet and drinking; Abolition societies to "the patriarchal institution of slavery;" peace and non-resistance societies would apply religion to war, to government, and would snap off at once whatever interfered with the Christian maxim,

"Love one another." These societies are numerous, and certainly constitute one of the most pleasing and promising signs of the times. They show that religion is coming out of the Church, and girding herself for the world of work that lies before her. These efforts are good; they are noble and divine. But as yet this action is only superficial and partial, and human passions sometimes interrupt the good work. The reformer leans to one side, and will see but a single vice. In a better age all of these societies might be blamed, — sometimes for their extravagance, though oftener for their coldness and want of zeal. But now, when Christianity nods over her Bible, and sleeps in her pew of a Sunday, while she makes slaves or keeps them, and strives to render the rich richer and the poor poorer all the week, the world cannot afford to be nice, and criticise the only men that are awake and striving to do the world service.

Once more. The chief, the last application of religion to life, must be made individually, each man making his own life divine. Is this done, my friends? Is it your meat and drink to make the attempt? Our eyes, so long accustomed to a wicked or at least a mean life, often deceive us here; but could we look with Christian eyes, eyes purged from their selfish film, we should be a nine

days' wonder to ourselves. Let us suppose that ten men of superior mental and personal endowments of nature, and the most perfect culture we can conceive of, without much religion, and fifty men and women of little capacity and no cultivation, sailing together in a ship, should, by stress of weather, be forced upon some uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean. Suppose, further, that pleased with its luxuriant soil and pleasant climate, or finding no better, they should settle down there to live out their life; and those ten men of shrewdness and strength should take the fifty who are simple and weak, and make them their servants, not by force of arms, but by superior adroitness; that these fifty should do the unavoidable drudgery of the place, and in return should find a moderate subsistence, with scarce any chance for mental growth and improvement, while the ten should continually improve the mind in all things that do become a man. Suppose, further, that as one of the ten died, the strongest and shrewdest of the fifty should take his place and honors, and all parties seemed satisfied with the allotment, were about as Christian as we are in New England, and looked upon the state of things as natural and good. If we saw it all, what should we say? Certainly, that all was wrong; it was a good thing that the few should be educated, but justice demanded that each

and all should have the best education the whole community could give. We should say those men who were stronger than the rest are false men, because they sought only to benefit themselves, not to uplift the others and bless them; that as the ten were shrewd, they should have thoughts for the simple; as they were strong, they should have borne the heaviest burdens. This decision would be wise and Christian. Then if we came home to New England, we should find the story of this fabulous island was a true tale of society here. The strong, the shrewd, the cunning, the educated, seek to take care of themselves, and their concern for others is only the rare exception to the general rule. No doubt it is a man's first duty to take care of himself; but is not care for others likewise the legitimate work of those calling themselves disciples of Jesus, who sought nothing for himself, but gave his life for others? Yet how stands the fact? Take a young man of superior abilities, of enviable position, and the best culture which young men commonly get, and as he starts in life, what is his aim? Is it not to get the most out of society, in the shape of wealth and honors, while he does the least for society? Not that he says this to himself in words, but his life reveals what lies unconsciously in his heart, at the bottom of all. This should be his aim, — to be a man, and

do the greatest for himself, and at the same time the most for all others likewise. If this were the rule, would you find men asking for privileges, struggling for the easiest place and the wealthiest honors? Who is the true soldier, — he who sits in the camp and looks on the battle from afar and enjoys the spoil, or he who directs the charge, is first and foremost when the fight deepens, charging in the cannon's mouth?

If Christianity were applied in this way to life, each man would seek to do most for society, to make life comfortable and to be desired. He would seek to labor, not to be a drone in the hive, fattening on the honey others have toiled to gather in. If this application be made by the individual in all his acts, the whole work is done. You cannot be individually a Christian and socially a heathen and politically a savage. The one spirit ruling for the individual will run through society and fill the nation. Now, men are willing to apply religion but little to life, yet because they make religious actions the rare and occasional exceptions in their lives, fancy they are disciples of Christ and religious men. Here and there arises a good man, who rejoices in goodness, and seeks occasion to serve his fellows in a noiseless way; but even he makes but a partial application of Christianity to his life. The dread of innovations, the reverence for the

past and present, each excellent in itself, prevents the free action of the Divine Spirit. Still more does blindness to his actual state lay a flattering unction to his soul, and selfishness distract him from the noblest aims and truest life. If this is the case with the best of men, how is it with those less good? How is it with the worst? Many men are striving to serve God and at the same time serve and satisfy their own selfish will, which is at enmity with God; but the two cannot be done, so the service of each is imperfect and unsatisfying. Religion and selfishness come up before God, as the true woman and the false before Solomon to judgment. As both claimed the living child, while the false woman would palm her own dead offspring upon the true, so selfishness and religion claim the heart of man. But selfishness says to the great Judge of all, as that false woman said: "Divide the child; give me half and religion half." But religion, like the true mother, says, "Nay, that were destruction; rather give her all for the time, that by and by the child may declare for its true parent."

My friends, our only safety for time, our only safety for eternity, consists in this individual application of religion to life. Get all else, and what are you? Violating God's law, what are individuals, what nations? Ask the history of the world

and it will tell you. Political action alone is too weak, too superficial, to touch the deep causes that make a nation. No doubt good rulers can do much to aid all that is good, and bad rulers do more to destroy what is noble; but they will but skin and film the ulcerous spot, while rank corruption doth ruin and canker all within. When the whole land is sick with the infirmities and toils and sins of thousands of years, and needs some one to hold its aching head and prescribe remedies, they will give you a sub-treasury or a national bank, — good things in their way, no doubt, but how impotent to save a State! Look not for relief from this quarter. Trust not to societies to do the work; they can do much, but neither the chief nor the better part. It is the individual application of Christianity to life — the divine life — which each man and woman lives out in the spirit of daily duty, it is this alone that can save the man, can save society, and save the State. When this is done, — when common-sense is applied to religion, and Christianity applied to life individually, — social and political actions will take care of themselves. How little then shall we care about laws and creeds and theological distinctions, which make Orthodox or Unitarian or Old School or New School! A divine life will be all; and we shall care as little at which church we worship as whether we drink at

a fountain or a stream. Seeking as of first moment the kingdom of God, other things also shall be added unto us, — as a sound society, better rulers, a happy people, free from poverty, free from crime, educated, moral, religious.

1840.

VII.

A SERMON OF MAN.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he him. — GEN. i. 27.

MEN are often disposed to take an unfair view of human nature. There is always great danger lest the greater part of the race should undervalue the birthright God has given them. We see the wretchedness there is in the world, the sinner that is inveterate, the sin that has held possession for many a century. We see the selfishness of strong men, who might lift up and carry forward the whole race. We mourn at the servility of weak men who encourage the selfishness of the strong. We see too the meanness of the honorable of the earth, the little wisdom, honesty, and manliness needed for success and renown. We look at good men; they are "few and far between," so we say, and on their goodness we find spots. Here the pious man went astray; there the saint was overtaken and thrown down by sin. So we are ready to say, "Man is a low creature; this mortal life is

poor and dirty and short, a very sorry life at the best." Thus men say with Solomon, "All is vanity": folly is vain, wisdom vain likewise; life and death both vain; man is a foolish creature.

We look around us in life, and see enough of folly, sin, and bitter wretchedness. We look behind us, and the retrospect is still worse; for the folly of our times is nothing compared with some follies that are past and gone, and the wretchedness of old times has no parallel at present. We look in us, and we find the same thing; there is sin in our bones. We find it difficult to do right; there are temptations to meet. The way of duty seems steep and hard to tread; and the few who step forward in front of the age, and labor with great prayers to bless poor mortal men, encounter an opposition which soon crushes their bodies to the dust. We see how the ignorant misunderstand them, the superstitious curse them, the proud despise, the mean hate, and the violent and cunning thwart their plans. We see how the world treats its benefactors. They oppose the reformer; they goad him in public and sting him in private till they rouse the warlike element, and then wonder at the fierce tone with which his indignation rolls out, like a flow of molten stone from a volcano. We see that John the Baptist must leave his head in a charger, and Jesus be nailed to the cross, as soon as they attempt to

make men better; we see that every path where we may tread in safety has been beaten out of the hard flint, by the feet of prophets and martyrs, who went naked and bleeding, to smooth the way for our ungrateful tread. Seeing all this, we conclude that man is a very low animal; that he never can be made much better. So we tell the man of burning piety and deep love to God and man, to lay aside his dreams, to cease to think of benefiting his fellow-men. We tell Paul to keep to the mending of tents; and Simon of Tarsus and Simon of Capernaum, to keep to their fishing and their tanning. So we tell the strong sinner to become more selfish; that the Christian rule for the strong to help the weak is only an Oriental figure of speech, — which in plain English means, the strong shall help themselves. Thus is wickedness encouraged; a flattering unction is laid to the soul of indolence; a man is told he is good enough if as good as the rest of his townsmen; and humble piety goes to the ground; and Christianity becomes a word for men to swear by, and Jesus of Nazareth only a legendary name.

Nothing is more common than this belief in the lowness of human nature, in the fact of human sin, in the impossibility of directing the ways of men and women. They are not angels, we are told on all hands; this earth is not a paradise; and a

wise, pious man, who would make others wise and pious, has always been met with the retort, "Why, you would make men angels, and earth heaven. Then what use of a future state?" As if earth were in danger of being too much like heaven, — or men and women likely to be too angelic. Some popular forms of religion owe their efficacy — with many people — chiefly to the low view they take of man. They tell us he is totally lost; that he is a poor grovelling worm, an outcast from God; that there is nothing in him that is noble, that even his best work is as filthy rags. The few who speak a word in praise of the human soul, who tell us how great it is, how capable of unbounded progress; the few who rely on its capabilities and would make all men noble and true, — are told they are but dreamers of dreams; they would make man a God, when he is but a worm of the dust; born of a worm, to live a worm, to die a worm — and only to become a fly in heaven. They are told that their doctrine is too high for this world, and too low for the next; so of no use in either, but only to be classed with dreams whose good thoughts yielded no fruit. Since these things are so, it is no wonder that many who begin with beating hearts and the loftiest faith in man soon conclude they are mistaken, and so fall into the common way of thought and speech, and rest satisfied with affairs as they are.

Now, in the midst of this cry of the lowness of human nature, this popular despair of man, it is beautiful to look back to those great souls who walked with God in the infancy of the world, when the stars were fresh and young, and man still uncorrupt; when tyrant custom had not shackled him; before public opinion lay on him heavy and fast, and deep almost as life. It is beautiful to turn back to the Old Testament and breathe the breath of primeval man which still rustles fragrant in its leaves; to catch the spirit of piety and reverence, and faith in man, which sweeps on amid the strange and uncouth natures of that rude time, or plays amid the graceful imagery which Oriental piety has set amid its garden of prayer and its temple of praise. Here, in the first chapter of the old book, we find it written, "God created man in his own image." This means, not that God and man have the same form, but that there is something divine, something godlike in man.

No book takes a nobler view of man's nature than the Bible; it tells us that he is made a little lower than the angels. Paul calls us sons of God. The Old Testament says we were made for paradise and perfect earthly bliss; the New Testament, that we were made for the kingdom of heaven, for perfection, for what is best in our nature. Here the wisest, deepest souls of the most pious nation

in the Old World attest the dignity of man, and they spoke what they felt. There the greatest soul that has borne the heavy load of the flesh about him attests the same thing, speaking what he knew, felt, and lived. Which view shall we take, — the opinion of men selfish and unruly, or the high word of Moses, of Paul and Jesus, who went down to the deeps and up to the heights of man, and told what they saw on the mountain of inspiration? Men believe as they live, the low meanly, the true nobly.

Let us look a little more minutely into these matters, and glance somewhat in detail, though briefly, at the nobleness of man's nature and his large capacities. For this purpose we may make a division of human nature into the understanding, the affections, and the moral and religious sentiments.

First, the understanding. Its greatness may be inferred from its works. Let us suppose we were to examine a little berry from a bush with a microscope of magnifying power sufficiently great to show that its surface was diversified with plains and mountains, land and sea, and the land inhabited by a race of creatures proportionate in size to the puny littleness of this planet, so that their size bore the same proportion to the berry, which was one eighth of an inch in diameter, that our size bears to the earth, which is eight thousand miles in diameter; that the minute dust on the berry's surface

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formed vast mountains to these inconceivably small creatures. Let us suppose we should discover that these little creatures had tilled the surface of this sphere, built villages and towns, had ships and factories, steamboats and railroads; still further that they pursued science, and had calculated the distance between their own sphere and others, even to the distance of many rods; that they had estimated its weight, determined its size, its shape, and knew how much it differed from a perfect globe; that they had penetrated its interior and found out how it grew, how long it had been in its present shape, and how rapidly it was dying,—should we not say these little creatures were the most surprising beings; that they had a nature as vast as their world was little, an understanding before which angels might bow down? Yet what these fabulous creatures have done on this berry one eighth of an inch in diameter, men have done on this world eight thousand miles in diameter. The understanding of man has measured the earth and weighed it. He can tell the distance to the sun, and the farthest planet; he has learned the laws by which they move; can tell you where they were four thousand years ago, or will be four thousand years hence. He knows their weight, how they attract each other. He measures the celestial spaces, is familiar with Arcturus and Orion, and knows at what hour of the

day Sirius set or rose in the year the Pyramid was finished. This knowledge is so common that we almost cease to wonder at it, not reflecting what mysterious force it implies in little creatures scarce six feet high to measure spaces thousands and thousands of miles wide, without changing their positions. Man makes the stars to keep time for him; by the force of his understanding, he can bind the strong sea, and seize on the rough elements that slumber in the mountains and caverns of the earth and make them his servants, to run his errands up and down the earth.

But the greatness of man's understanding is only more obvious in science, it is not greater. The wise saying of Moses, or Socrates, which has ploughed through the ages and come down to us, is no less a proof of the wondrous power of the mind of man, — no less a sign of the image of God. The form which some artist carves out of the rock of humanity, and hands down to us through years of waiting, proves the same greatness of thought which sails the celestial spaces and tells us where the comet hides. Perhaps nothing shows more obviously to all men the mightiness of the understanding of man than the well-known fact that we are able to tell the ages of continents and islands, when they assumed their present form, what races of animals peopled them, what plants grew thereon,

what fish sailed their seas, what birds soared in the sky thousands of years before there was a man on the face of the earth. The hieroglyphics of God lie writ on the stone ; and human science reads the wondrous scroll.

Second, the affections, which are greater than the understanding, more divine in their action. It is nobler to love your brother than to think the thoughts of Moses or Leibnitz. It is a great thing, no doubt, to be master of science, and hold in your hand the key to Nature's wide domain; but it is little compared to that soft affection which seeks to bless objects dear to itself. The affection, pure and disinterested, which one man sometimes bears another, shows a soul deeper and truer than the proudest science ever reveals. The love which a mother bears for her child, which broods over it with unceasing care, enduring days of privation and nights of watching for its sake, not counting this a sacrifice, but a pleasure, — this affection tells of deeper depth and loftier heights than the philosopher finds in the heavens above him. That power of love which serves to bring the whole being of a mother into this one sentiment, so that her thoughts, cares, wishes, supplications, all have this one end and aim for the time; so that self is forgot; so that common bodily wants cease to be felt, and the frail woman's body is strong to do and suffer through

force of this feeling, — this shows a dignity and divinity of soul far beyond what science requires. The astronomer may carry a selfish spirit into his lofty thoughts; ambition, love of renown, may inspire him to outwatch the stars; but the affection which abandons itself for the welfare of one dearer than self, the love which counts as nothing the service it renders, repines not while it suffers, and so is warmed by the smoke of its own incense, — this is deeper and diviner than any power of thought, though it may measure the sky and create poems and philosophies, the admiration of the wise and the despair of the ambitious. To show the greatness of human nature, you shall not bring up Solomon with his wisdom, nor holy Esaias with his lips of fire; you shall not tell me of Bacon and Newton, who inverted all the thoughts of their predecessors, and bent their eagle gaze far on into time, thinking for ages not yet come; but you shall go to a humble cottage and show me some mother dividing with her child the scanty pittance her toil has earned, and taking but a crumb for herself. You shall see the patience with which she watches over a sickly child, and still bears up when the body craves food and rest, and she is sick at heart. The courage that wades to its neck in blood is cowardice to this heroism of affection; the sage's thought, the artist's fancy, the orator's liquid

speech, are poor and petty compared to this. It transmutes the lowliest cabin in Ireland into a spot holy as the spot the sacred tread. To find this depth of soul, it is not a council of kings we are to look at, nor an assembly of sages, where genius and wisdom empurple the air with their light: we are to go to that poor widow who dropped into the temple chest her two mites, which made, both of them, but the quarter of a penny. It is here we are to look. It is this affection which finds out God, when the world in its wisdom knows him not; prophets and Saviours find repose on the bosom of love, while the wise would scourge them and nail them to the cross. It is this which welcomes goodness, and watches when it dies, and comes early to its tomb; while greatness sits in its place, and cunning puts a watch over the poor, and wise men invent a lie to deceive the people.

Third, a proof equally strong may be seen in the moral state of man. To adhere to a great principle of right in the midst of trouble and persecution and distress, because it is right, shows equally the greatness of man. Here he asks no reward, he quails at no dangers, but does what he knows is right and true, though he knows they for whom it is done mock at and oppress him. This implies a stern greatness of soul which may not seem so beautiful as the affections, but betrays the secret

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strength that lies in man's soul. The Christian apostles, the martyrs of every religion that ever has been, who have sealed with their blood the faith they lived out, — they are examples of this kind of greatness. These are the men who took up truth when she had fallen by the wayside, and bore her through the conflict of life, through fiery assaults and persecution unto death. They bore the burdens of the world; they stood in the forefront of the battle, to do and to dare for principle and truth. Set truth, with death, in one scale, and falsehood, with life and ease, in the other, they will not waver. Over them steel loses its power, and public opprobrium its shame.

Fourth, the religious element in man is most of all divine. This faith, this perfect reliance on the great soul of all things, which made you and the stars over your head, — a reliance so deep and perfect that there is no doubt of his goodness, his presence in trouble, his triumph in death, his infinite love, to watch over and bless in all ages not yet seen by the soul, — this faith reveals still more closely the likeness of God in which we are made. It can rejoice in its troubles; it finds a pillow in the wildest storms; does not despair when the objects of affection are wrung from its grasp; does not sink when Nature weeps bloody tears; imprecates no evil on its foes though the breath expire

in their hands, but asks pardon for their ignorance; in view of its own distress, asks only that God's will be done. This faith, that sees through trouble, bears crosses with no murmurs, survives the loss of all the mortal heart holds dearest, and asks for nothing but freedom from its fears and submission for itself, — how vast a thing it is! It lifts us above the wonders of science, which has its bounds, carries us beyond the human affections, is more blessed than moral principle, and gives to each heart an element of heaven itself. Man may stand for a time on moral principle alone, but it is narrow as it is high. No doubt it is noble in man to achieve the wonders of science and all the miracles of thought; to possess a principle which can sustain him in the most terrible of trials, and never shrink in depths of affliction; that is content to spend and be spent; and when all of them are united in one man, well is he called the image of God, a little lower than the angels.

But the religious element is more than all these. It seems to raise him to the skies, to give him readiest access to the mind of God; to reveal his majestic presence in each atom of space, in each moment of time, when the heart swells high with hope, or faints and is feeble with grief. In this, the loftiness and dignity of man are more than ever apparent. To the best spirit there comes a

time when knowledge cannot sustain, when the mind totters and knows not which way to turn, but feels it must fall and perhaps perish, — times when we look round for help, and there is none on the earth. Our truest assistants have fled, and are but a cloud of dust far off where the sky comes down to the land. There is a time when friends forsake, when there is no hope, the world has no sympathy; when life seems a weary and heavy burden, and death the only relief, — and that too intolerable. Then the soul of faith comes into the man. He knows that he is sure by the perfect witness of God. He feels the sympathy of that great Soul of all, and says with modest triumph, "I am not alone. No, God is with me." Light seems to expire, mortal affections cease their melody; but the Infinite speaks to his soul comfort too deep and too divine for words. What if he has not the sun of human affections to cheer him! The faces of the stars look from the serene depths of divine love, and say, "Well done!" What if the sweet music of human approbation is hushed to his ear, the melody of the spheres rolls in upon his soul its tranquil tide, and that same voice that was in the beginning says, "Thou art my beloved Son." Earth is overcome; heaven is gained.

It is well that we are sometimes tried with such fiery trials, that we may know how strong we are,

and how near is God. It is well that God now and then in this world raises us up a hero of the spirit, — a Moses, a Paul, a Jesus, — to show us the measure of a man, and how much in us is divine, else we should form low views of our heart and life.

Now, all of these things are but human; the elements of them all lie in each man that is born of woman. We have all felt these same sentiments in a degree. Yes, the poorest of us all has in him the embryo of Moses and of Jesus. Yes, of much more, for even Jesus has not exhausted the capacity of man; what is not unfolded now may be hereafter. No one will say the entireness of man's power has been lived out.

In view of this common image in which we are created, how poor are the distinctions the world has made! In view of this image of God in which we are created, how poor are the attainments of you and me, — yes, of the best of us! My friends, you all know it is possible to live in this divine nature, and so approach continually to the likeness of God, or it is possible to live the other way, till you say it is all a dream, this talk of human greatness, — a shallow dream, and nothing but a dream.

> "Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime."

Moses and Christ, and all the great souls that have ever lived, tell us what is in man; they bring life to

us; they make wisdom wiser, love deeper, life more holy and more high. But they do it only for those who, like them, love what is good and fair and holy. It is of no use to you that Moses made laws and lived divinely, and Christ rests from his labors and has gone into the sky, unless you also will do the same. You may have all their divine capacities, and yet never use them; may know of all the examples of wisdom, love, virtue, religion, that exalt our idea of man, and may believe there is somewhat divine in you likewise, and yet make your life little and weak and low. You may see the kingdom of heaven right at hand, and yet suffer a mere passion to bar its glittering gate. You may be told on a Sunday of the excellency of a glorious life, and yet never care to make it your own during the week. My friends, does it not become men of this capacity to ask sometimes where they are, and whither they go; whether each day brings them forward or casts them back? To perfect in you the image of God is the work of a life,— the great work. It can be accomplished only by a life. Not by a few brief resolutions in your better moments, though they have their use, but by the plain path of daily duty is this won; by faithful work and just thought, pure and holy love, the heart of goodness and the soul of faith.

1841.

VIII.

THE FACT OF LIFE AND THE IDEA OF LIFE.

The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. — Rom. vii. 19.

IN this verse the apostle speaks of two things and implies a third thing; he speaks of the desire of a good life and the living of one not good, and implies that there is thus a sad contradiction between the two. Let us follow out the apostle's fertile hint. Your attention is asked therefore to a sermon on the idea of life, the fact of life, and the reconciliation we are to make between the idea and the fact.

1. *The Idea of Life.* — All men have some idea of what they ought to be and how they ought to live. There is no man who does not know there is a wrong way which he ought to shun, and a right way he ought to follow. No doubt in many this idea is very confused; it is rarely made a subject of careful and serious meditation. It is true that some go through the world and perhaps never spend so much thought on the plan of a good life

as they spend on the purchase of a horse. This is a hard thing to say, but many there are who rarely dwell upon this subject; who do not accustom themselves to think of principles, but only of actions, and judge them, not by an ideal standard of right, but by a practical one of interest; and if the action is successful, and money comes of it, all is well. Still, even those men have an idea which is above their actual character. No one would say he was so good as he should be, — so self-denying; so ready to forgive an injury; so eager to do all possible good to him who needs it. The idea may be rarely dwelt on, but it is there. It may be voiceless, and for all present purposes useless, but there it is. The drunkard, the miser, the knave, the churl, the sharper, and the shrew, all know better than they do.

We get at this idea of what we should be, just as the spiritual faculties in us expand. As we see good and evil in life, as we feel the various emotions in ourselves, we get a knowledge of what is distinctly and purely good. We see a good man, but he is not so good as our idea of goodness; for that rises above all the limitations which diminish and hinder the goodness of this man and that. So by means of this idea of goodness, we are able to criticise the character of men who pass for good, and blame Paul for his passion, Peter for his weakness

and falsehood, and Barnabas and Mark for their disagreement. When a man comes completely up to our idea of goodness, we pronounce him a perfect man, or, in the language of the Pagans and of some Christian scholars, a God-man.

Now, this idea of goodness, moral and soul perfection, is as native to our constitution as seeing is native to the eye, and hearing to the ear. The idea does not come from without, but from within. To use the language of the present theology, it is a revelation; outward things help us to do it. We are all of us in this way indebted to the influence of our parents, who have helped or hindered our growth; to our friends, whose good or bad character had an influence subtle and unseen, it may be, but real and deep; to the books we read; to the services in the church we frequent; to the past and present; above all these external helps, to Jesus of Nazareth, who gave us the idea in his words, and showed it bright and beaming and beautiful in his life.

But we do not come all at once to a perfect perception of this idea; it is of gradual growth and development in most men. An idea lies in twilight before it comes to day. We do not come all at once to the full stature of spirit we are made to reach. The idea of what we should be comes with our growth. Each new virtue we see, each holy

emotion we feel, each good action we do, helps to elevate our standard of what we should be and feel and do. Thus the idea of the boy is little and low compared with that of the true man, though it sometimes happens that shades of darkness close upon the heaven that hung about us in infancy, and the man's dreams of perfection are poor and dim when measured by the boy's idea. In such a case life is a retreat, not a progress. But if the man lives true and nobly, in youth he passes by the spot which his boyish fancy fixed on as the summit of things, and sees untrod mountains still above him, where a purer sunlight and a more transparent atmosphere invite him upward and on. In manhood he leaves behind him the prayers of his youth, and soars and sings at a loftier height; and when old age confirms the possession of what the boy promised, what the youth prayed for, and what manhood won, the idea goes farther up, and weaves a halo of glory about the silver hairs of age; and in the transparent quietness of that period, his eye purged of the film of passion, he sees what never cheered his thought before. So it was with Socrates; so with Paul; so with many a blessed man; with all who live fair and true.

Now, this idea involves several things relative to man's moral and religious character. We may consider them alone.

What is our conception of a perfect and complete man? He is gifted with each intellectual accomplishment and every manly grace; but we feel that the absence of them does not mar the moral perfection of man, and know that perhaps no one has been created in the full stature of human possibility, being in one person all that human nature will allow or is capable of being in many persons. To be the saint, the sage, poet and artist, musician, statesman, mechanic, all in one, and perfect in each, — this is a privilege God grants to none of his children. For human nature is never exhausted in one man, —

> "One science only will one genius fit."

But we pronounce a man perfect, and as he should be, when even without these intellectual and other graces, his moral and religious nature is as it should be. No one objects to Paul that he was not a sculptor, nor to Jesus that he sung no psalms like the sweet singer of Israel. Laying aside that which is accidental, the idea involves this: a character conformable to the eternal rule of right; a man that does right, thinks right, feels right; and that not only now and then, and here and there, but everywhere and always; a man who is thoroughly true to himself and what God gives him, whose thought is divine, and his

life as his thought. Every man who thinks seriously will confess that such an idea is the true one to be copied and made real in action. This idea is reasonable, natural, and Christian. It stands when tried by whatever tests. Present this idea to a serious man, he feels that it ought to fit him and become his life.

2. *The Fact of Life.* — Each man of us all has a certain character of his own peculiar to himself, and so different from that of any other man. This character — and by this is meant not his reputation, not the opinion others have about him, but the thing he is himself — is the result of two forces. First, that spiritual power which is the man himself, stripped of all accidental additions, and secondly, the circumstances of his bodily organization, and the other external matters which make up his outward condition. So then we say, all in a word, his character is the result of the man's soul and of his circumstances. Some say a man's soul makes his circumstances; others that the circumstances make the soul. The truth seems to be that they act and react upon one another, and generate the character of the man in general, and give it the special emphasis which belongs to the man; and the character is spiritual just so far as it rests on eternal principles of immutable morality and so is above circumstances;

and unspiritual just so far as it is dependent upon circumstances and subject to them, — just so far as it does not rest on immutable principles of morality.

Now, what, let us ask, is the fact of life in general? It does not answer to the idea. The character and the action of most men seem accidental, dependent on circumstances, not essential and resting on principle. It is not with them an habitual principle to do always their best. You know that the granite will be as stable to-morrow as it was last night; you do not know that Alexander and Peter, your neighbors, will be honest out of sight. They follow good if it comes in their way. They are kind-hearted when their interest demands it; virtuous, in a land of sober habits; religious, so far as it is popular so to be; Christian, because it falls in with the current of the times; they are self-denying when nothing is to be given or done; tolerant when all agree with them; tranquil when nothing disturbs; and forgiving when nobody offends them. But let the circumstances of the case vary and be just the opposite; then the man is hard-hearted through interest, goes to the wildest excess when out of sight of the land of sober habits; he is religious when religion is popular, and destitute of Christianity among the heathen. His self-denial is gone when it is called to the work; his tolerance

vanishes the moment you disagree with him; a small temptation overcomes his tranquillity; and his forgiving love is clean gone forever, the moment a neighbor offends him by word or act. Of course this must take place when the character rests on circumstances; the cause changes, and of course the effect also changes. He has virtually said to principle as Jacob said to Jehovah, "If thou wilt keep me out of all manner of trouble, then thou shalt be my God; if not, not."

Now, compare this idea, absolute and perfect, the idea of divine life, with the fact of life as it is, and there is a gloomy contradiction between them. Everybody that thinks, sees it; whosoever feels, mourns over it. Alas for us! — "being darkly wise and rudely great," we may well say with Paul, "We do not the good we know; who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" I will not attempt to point out for others the great gulf between the idea and the fact of life, — what a man knows he should be, and what he feels he is, — but I will ask you each to do it for himself; to do it coolly, seriously, with thoroughness.

3. When the idea and the fact do not correspond, and a serious man sees and feels the gulf between them, there comes difficulty and trouble. The idea and the fact contend in the man, — the one for its rights, the other for the possession of what it has

got. This is the great battle of the soul and the senses; no wonder at the strong language in which men paint it. It is Satan and the archangel contending for the life of the man. Bunyan says of it, "the Devil fought with me weeks long." In this collision, to settle the question really and finally, one of two things must be done: either the idea must be brought down, or the fact must be brought up. There is no peace for a serious man till this question is disposed of. In the heart of a man serious and desirous of serving God, but who has been led into evil ways, it is a plain matter. He elevates the *fact* of his life, becomes his idea; penitent, he passes over the great gulf, and is received into Abraham's bosom. But with a selfish man, of no great regard for principles, a man conformed to this world and loving conformity therewith, the matter takes a different shape. He puts off the question, trusts as before to accident, is outwardly good to-day, and to-morrow outwardly bad, but inwardly deficient in one case as much as the other. He would love God, and yet keep in with mammon; he seeks the kingdom of heaven, yet makes to himself a friend of the mammon of unrighteousness; is neither hot nor cold; is perhaps the more devout of a Sunday because he left off sin the night before, and hopes to resume it the next morning. He is half ashamed of the fact of

his life, but afraid of the idea of life; for he sees where it would carry him, and being frightened now and then, he dreams, as it were, and talks in his sleep, swears a prayer or two, puts up a vow to live, as he feels he should, a life lived on principle and purpose, — a life true to the idea. But soon he sleeps again. This course may be pursued years long. I need not tell the falseness of such a course, nor its sadness; they know who try it. But the balance will not always swing over, shake it often as you will, when one scale is charged with life and the other with death. By and by the beam turns. The idea is dim, and the fact is dark. Slowly the light of God wanes and grows pale in the soul, as the dreams of the boy, the heaven that lay about us in our infancy, fades out of the man; as the senses grow over the spirit, and the man abandons principle altogether, becomes what in sin some men are. Few things are so melancholy. Let us turn away our eyes from beholding a scene so sad.

There are two false ways whereby men seek to quiet the strife between the pure idea and the troubled fact. One is that of the mystic, the other that of the sensualist. Both feel the discord; both seek to end it by destroying or winking out of sight one of the parties to this discord, or concealing one of the factors of this product. The mystic refuses

to look at the fact, the sensualist at the idea; so the mystic lives only in the idea, but does not seek to make it his life. His idea is beautiful and divine, the idea of an angel life, — calm as the stars, so serene and high; but he leaves the fact to the care of itself. Morality, goodness, love, faith, are everything in thought, nothing in life. His idea sits like a vestal virgin, — free from all contact with the world, queenly and majestic, but useless, and without fruit. The sensualist — by whom I do not mean a man who wallows in sin of the senses — puts out the idea. He will not look at the principle. He is always afraid lest his standard be too high, lest he aim to be "righteous over-much." Justice, goodness, truth, love, are nothing to him, worth only what they will bring. He feels that he must do one of two things, — give up his idea, or his fact of life. He lets the idea go. It once happened that a woman given to the vanities of the world heard for some months a Christian preacher — now of great fame — whose doctrine was angel music played on a mortal string; and feeling, as she confessed, that she must change her life if she continued to hear such words, she left the church and sought elsewhere what could easily be found, — words of more earthly note. She abandoned the idea which she knew to be right for the sake of the fact, poor, wretched, and unsatisfying. Such things

are not so rare as we fancy; it is the tale of many a man. As he sets out in life, his idea is high, his dream beautiful. He means to live it out; but by and by he concludes that the world never can be much mended, that little is to be got out of life. So he sits down contented. Few things are more mournful than this, — to see how soon the sensuality and sin which are in the world rob youth of its dreams, and man of his hope; take the prayer out of the soul, the fire out of the heart, the idea out of the man, and leave him poor and pitiful, with no hope in the future, no satisfaction in the past, no love for the present. How blessed it is to see one pass through the gayety and grief of life, its cares, troubles, perils, who has the garlands and shining robes of his ideal still about him; whom defeat dismays not, nor the sight of sin causes to despair, nor toil and grief afflict with heaviness of heart. Such a man bids us take courage, — to make the fact like the idea, and that still higher yet.

But both of the others, the mystic and the sensualist, if they succeed in their end, are farther from this purpose than before; they purchase peace by abandoning that which was worth contending about or living for. The old Romans, says truth-telling Tacitus, devastated a province, killing men, women, and children, and then proclaimed peace when they had left only a solitude.

4. *The Reconciliation of the Idea and the Fact.* — This is a matter simple and plain. Make your idea your life, in little things, great things, all things.

When a man attempts really to reconcile his fact with his idea of life, the first result is peace. He is at one with himself, at one with God. The clouds of evening have no angry look, for he is pure as morning's dawn. He is not torn with that conflict which goes on in some men incessantly, when they cannot make up their minds to be good all over and all through, but wish to steer a halfway course, have a chapel for God, and offer the Devil some small sacrifice in a by-place. All this is at an end. The angel of peace dwells in his heart; there is none to molest nor drive him away. He goes on a pilgrimage toward his native land, — the realm of angels, — each night pitching his tent a day's march nearer home.

The next result is growth. His idea rises higher and higher yet. What was before dark, or light only in parts, becomes all one light; as before morning dawns, the stars keep their high watch in the heavens, and seem too beautiful to be used, but bright enough to keep us from stumbling; but by and by the dayspring begins, the stars grow pale, as the gray and early light comes over the sky; one after another, the stars burn dim and expire. It is

neither day nor night, but a negative of darkness, an elimination of light. Soon the rosy dawn comes up; the crimson light kisses the hill-tops and the trees, the full sun comes in strength, burning and beauteous. So in this state of reconciliation with the idea and the fact of life, the idea grows sublime and more glorious, and carries the life up with it. Then how fair it is to live! Man, not sensual but divine; pure, true, and religious. Such is the life of the sons of God. Look on the idea of Christ given for the world! Look on the fact of the world's life, — its life as it is. Nay, turn to what concerns us more nearly; look at the fact of your own life. What a great gulf between that and the idea! Yet each may bridge over that gulf, may live as high as he thinks and feels.

1842.

IX.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. — LUKE xxiii. 33.

WHEN a man dies, we all take an interest in him, if never before. You see the lifeless body of some poor outcast who has died under a wall with none to close his eyes and minister to the last bitter wants of nature. You feel a respect for the poor remains that once held a soul, which is now gone back to its God, and perhaps shines brighter than that of many a saint. You think of the friends that will ask for him and repeat his name again and again, and dream and start in their sleep for joy that he has come, and wake to find it was a dream; you think of the mother that bore him, and such as called him child, brother, friend. The difference betwixt you and him is lost for the moment, and you feel a veneration for the clod that was but now informed by a soul. When some criminal is put to death by the laws he has long violated, there is a reaction in his favor; when it is said he

who had long done wickedness has now paid the penalty set upon crime, we say, "Well, perhaps there were some mitigating circumstances which we do not know, — he had stronger passions than we, his companions were dissolute, his father set him no good example, there was not a kind mother to train him up to goodness and to God, and lead him to heaven through pleasant paths." Death, the great leveller, has cancelled the bond we had against him; and the humanity that never dies, but often sleeps in us, comes up, and we feel an interest in the man, culprit though he be. When a man dies, leaving his work unfinished, his blossom in the bud; when a man wears himself out in a great work, or falls a martyr to his zeal, his patriotism, his religion, we feel for him not as for common men. We build an altar for him in our hearts and enshrine there his memory.

How do men cherish the names of such as have been faithful unto death in the cause they undertook! What charms has poetry woven about the fiery death of the soldier! To many it seems attractive and full of glory. How do we honor that long line of martyrs from the beginning and reaching on in shadowy and wide ranks through all the ages of Christian story, — the men who took their lives in their hands, and dared be free; the men who opposed the darkness, the error, the fury, the

sin of their time, and met a prophet's reward; shame and death, ah! there is a shrine for such men in all hearts that are true. You may persecute men, but out of the very persecution their guardian and deliverer rises; put them to death, and out of their ashes there spring up new men and greater.

It was the custom of an ancient State, when a war was ended, to bring home the bones of their slain children with solemn pomp to the mother city. Then were formal and costly honors paid to them, while all the public followed in the train of mourners for the martyrs of patriotism. Then some man of dignified character whose reputation gave weight to his words, some man of persuasive and eloquent speech, some Pericles or Demosthenes at the public council, stood up and celebrated the courage of those who nobly dared to die. The lesson sank into the people's mind. The self-denial of the sire was wrought into the spirit of the son. The same principle acts in the Church. Its confessors, its martyrs, — they are brightest among its saints, honored in holy hearts. Now such martyrs are not rare. The age for them has passed away; but could it return, there would be enough of us, cold and practical as we seem, to lay down our life on the headstone block or breathe it away in the hiss of blazing fagots. It is but a cheap courage, after all, that is required for that.

Now, here in the case of Jesus we have a young man but little more than thirty years old, just beginning his greatest work, dying a martyr to his faith; slain by the men he sought to bless; a martyr to religion, dying the most ignominious of deaths, with a criminal on each hand, to add injury to the inglorious cross. Yet we see from the spot, from the gallows on which he suffered, from the hour when he bowed his head and said, "It is finished," that a light has gone out to the ends of the earth, — a light which never will set. We see that very cross to which he was nailed invested with a glory far greater than a monarch's crown. Men bear it on their banners, place it in their churches; it is to them the symbol of self-denial and unconquerable might. Women wear it on their bosom, a silent but precious symbol of the uncertainties of life, of the strength that overcomes them. From the hour when that young man of Galilee said, "Father, forgive them," with what a new glory has the Son of man been invested!

What is it that makes the magic of this death, and fixes all eyes on that scene of his life? It is common to die for one's faith, — above all, to die for one's religious faith. Each nation can furnish examples of that. Huss and Jerome of Prague, and John Rogers and Cranmer, have lived nearer our time, each laying down his life for his faith; but we

never think of them in connection with our faith. Why is it that the crucifixion of Christ is the great event in his life to so many men, the great event in the world's life? I think it must be sought in the character of the man, the circumstances of the case, and the consequences of the event.

First, here is the noblest of the sons of men, so pure that his accuser and judge said, "I find no fault in the man;" so religious and moral that to all of us, eighteen centuries after his death, he stands as the ideal and archetype of religion, a complete man of faith and works, cut off by the very men he sought to save, cut off for his excellence, not for his want of it. He who had gone about doing good, a young man, whom fear could not dismay, nor wealth bribe, nor the devout respect felt for Moses and Elias turn from the path of duty, — this man, the bud and orient blossom of humanity, to be thus cut down! Here was purity so great that the next age worshipped him; spiritual power so vast and with so deep insight, a heart so loving, a life so fair, that the best portion of the race of men for sixteen centuries have counted him a god, yes, the very God; and it all falls at the hands of its foes. To step aside from the opinions so often formed of Jesus, and opinions for which the world has fought bitter wars, let us contemplate him freely as a man, tempted in all

things like as we are, yet without sin, as the evangelists and apostles contemplated him. Look at the work he had undertaken, to bring about the kingdom of God on earth, — that is, to break every yoke of superstition, folly, sin; to establish the reign of peace, brotherhood, love; to make religion not a thing of temples and forms and ritual observance, but a thing of daily life; to restore to man his rights and bring him to his true estate. Compare this to any reform of past time, and what a work was here, — a work with no bounds; a work undertaken by a Jewish carpenter, who began when about thirty years old. Let us look a moment at the other great reforms of the world; the main attempts, I mean, to promote man's growth in manliness, in wisdom and religion. There are three such, most distinctly marked.

The reform by Luther was one; but here the aim was partial; to set men free from the superstition of the Church. Its great leaders did not see other yokes of bondage with which men's necks were oppressed. A great soul was there, and greatly striving, but its aim, though high, was not the highest; its method, though fair, was not the fairest. The next great reform, to go backward in the scroll of time, was the attempt of Socrates to restore the Athenian youth to goodness and religion. It is one of the noblest pages of the

world that records the story of that great and good man; you and I are his debtors. His aim too was noble, but it was partial. He aimed only to restore the old religion, not to lead men to absolute religion; to establish such morality as was worth while in an Athenian youth, not absolute morality. I know his aim, though partial, was nobler by far than some Christians make the aim of Christ to have been, but they are Christians that know not what they do. Socrates too died as a martyr to his work, but how different the work! Go back still farther to another great reform, that of Moses. Here too was one of the greatest men of the ancient world. To forsake the worship of many gods, the dreadful and licentious rites of Egypt or Chaldea, and take to the worship of one God, — how beautiful the thought, how vast the stride humanity would make! But here too there were limitations. The end of Moses was not to make a man religious and moral at all times and all places, but in the temple, on great occasions. Then too there were defects in the aim he set before men. The whole had an outside character.

Compare the work of Jesus, then, with any one of the three mighty reforms, that of Moses, of Socrates, of Luther, — though the last was the work of many minds and was only an attempt to apply anew the words of Jesus himself, — and what a

difference between them! How does the aim of Jesus stand conspicuous over all the rest! It was this work of reconciling man with man; of making the strong willing to bear the strong man's burden and to help the weak; the work of teaching men that they had a Father, in whose presence it was beautiful to be, — a Father who sought to make them truly blessed, and had raised up prophets and good men; it was to bring men to see their Father; to feel him as a living soul, present with them in trouble, in temptation, in joy, in all that makes our life. This is a work worthy of angels, worthy of a son of God, worthy of God. A pious man feels God's presence everywhere. He cannot look but each foot of space is a text from which Nature preaches of Him that is and shall be. He sees His works in all the events of human history, — at the death of a martyr; in the passage of a ship laden with holy men, over the wilderness of waters; in the discovery of each art and science; in all religious and moral reforms. There is a very evident action of the Divine Providence that orders all. There was in this work of Jesus. The time and place, the circumstances and the men, — all mark this as one of the great works of Providence for men. Not as if God departed from his laws, — which it is almost impious to suppose he should ever do, — but by his laws he did the work. It

was in this relation that Jesus stood. We try the man by his work, measure him by the shadow he cast upon the world, and what a man was there!

Secondly, the circumstances of the case. We see a man contending against odds, one against many, and even if that one is in the wrong, we cannot but feel an interest in him who maintains such a struggle. But when it is a single man fighting against numbers and warring for truth and goodness and human rights and divine religion, the spectacle is one of the finest pictures of the morally sublime that this world can furnish, or fancy can devise. Such were the circumstances. All the worldliness of the Sadducees; all the hypocrisy of the Pharisees; the pride of the scribes; the theological rancor of the priests, rendered all the more bitter by the sight of multitudes fed by his word, and so forsaking the dross and husks of those auricular devotees; all of the old which had nothing but age to depend on; all of corruption which feared the light; all of tyranny which knew it trod men down to the ground while their blood cried to God for vengeance; all of the forces of the State, the train of the temple, — are united against this simple soul of Christ in his own great work. The world and the Church, the priest and the Devil, were leagued against this one holy soul. He was fighting the old battle for the souls of the

world, — the battle that never is lost at any moment, but is always won; for God carries forward the race of men, and holds them up when the prophets fail.

Thirdly, the consequences that have followed from the crucifixion have made us regard it in this light. How foolish is the race of man! To put down truth by persecution; put out a volcano with a stream of water; a conflagration with oil! The crucifixion turned attention at once to him that died for his faith. Had Jesus lived to be seventy, and died as Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, he would still have been just as much the Saviour and Redeemer of the world as now, for what he did for us was to teach the *truth*, and live *life*. The eyes of men must have been surely turned to that beautiful light. At last it must have been so; but as it was, Jesus, lifted on the cross, has drawn all men unto him. How soon the very cross itself became a symbol of all that was dearest and most true! Men contemplate him as suffering, — as suffering through the sins of men; and the warmest sympathy is felt not only for his doctrines, but his life, his person; and our hearts glow with enthusiasm at the thought of it. The "Father, forgive them" uttered on the cross, how much has it done! We often say Christ died for us; so he did in a certain sense. We are

blessed by his death; but how much more by his life! We are here not to die, but to live in the light of the truth he taught, of the truth he lived. His death is for us if it helps us to this; his life for us if we live divine as he; but if not so, it is for us in vain that he lived, in vain that he died.

You and I are not called on to die, as he; let us take up our cross daily, and do the duties of life and bear its burdens. Daily a cross is given us to bear, but what Jesus did we may do. Conquer as he conquered, for God is near us as to him, and ever as ready to aid and bless. Live as he lived, a life of truth and love, and his life and death have done their work for you. We speak of communion with Christ. That is a beautiful thought. Who does commune with Christ? He that asks what is good and right to do, to think, to feel, who goes forward in this work, — the Christ-like character, life, soul, — he communes with Christ, and is with God. In him is the word fulfilled, "We will come to him and make our abode with him."

1842.

X.

CHRISTIAN ADVANCEMENT.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. — PHIL. iii. 13.

IN our life and physical growth things come gradually on. We are first babes, then children, then youths, then men. From the age we call manhood there is also a progress and a nobler maturity, which is likewise gradual. This latter is not marked with external signs, like the progress from babyhood to boyhood and from that to manhood. It is so in intellectual growth. One faculty after another is developed; truth after truth comes up in our mind, till the whole heaven opens upon us with resplendent stars. The boy fancies the limit he will set to his aspirations; the youth leaps over this barrier and sets a further bound to his progress, over which the man passes, not knowing it *is* a bound, and fares forth on his pilgrimage upward and on. The same is true in man's moral growth. We have trials in the cradle. The lesson of discipline begins early. The boy and the youth

have their peculiar temptations; and gradually we get courage and strength to face the moral dangers which beset the man. The power of religion, too, comes gradually upon us. As children, we turned pale at the thunder, trembling at God's angry voice chiding the world. Our boyish heart laughed at the rainbow, contented to believe that God was appeased again. How we quivered at the winter and joyed at the spring, counting each snowdrop and honeysuckle as a token of his pleasure and satisfaction with us! But our childish conception of God gives way, — a grander idea of the All-Perfect fills the bosom of the man. When the passionate blood grows cool and the fire-dance is over in the veins, the majestic ideas of religion take their place in the heart, enlarged and sanctified and blessed.

In the visible world there is what philosophy calls a law of continuity. All is done gradually, nothing by leaps. Invisibly the vegetable and animal world approach and intermingle. You cannot tell where the mineral kingdom begins, and the animal ends. They must be distinguished by their centre, not their circumference; by a type, not a limit. There are visible links that connect beast and bird, fish and insect. In animals lower down you see hints that a man is yet to be. In man you see as it were vestiges of the lower ani-

mals, a certain bruteness which it is difficult to explain, perhaps more difficult to manage. This brute element sometimes astonishes you in yourself. As the man lives truly, it gradually disappears; so it gets weeded out of human nature in its growth and cultivation, as cultivation corrects the native poison of some domestic plants. You see also in yourself elements of a higher being, a prophecy of somewhat greater than man. This astonishes you perhaps more than the brute element. It is so with the world of moral and religious ideas. There also is a progress, a law of continuity; nothing is done by leaps. There is a constant reaching upward from Adam to you and me, from Abraham to Christ. What a change in moral ideas, from the sacrifice of a boy on an altar, to be burned with fire, to loving your neighbor and your God! What a change, from the expectation of bitter torment and pain, to the promise of a heaven of continual growth in a man's qualities! What a progress in two thousand years! Yet there were great men between Abraham and Christ; many prophets in Judea, in Egypt, in Babylon, Greece. They helped smooth the way. One by one they taught the truth of the gospel, so that when Christ came, he had no new thing to teach; he but combined and applied to life what others had taught before. Not that he collected his doc-

trines in this way, getting a little from Zoroaster, a point from Socrates, and a thought from Plato; in his own large heart they sprung up. Abraham had passed away. The age of Abraham, the ideas of Abraham, and the sayings of Abraham were old-fashioned. Men gladly accepted what Moses never dreamed of. Did the progress end here? In ideas of morality and religion we have got no farther on. There is no getting above love to God and man, nothing higher; but in other thoughts connected with religion there has been a great advance. We know not what were Christ's ideas of a future state, except this, that justice would be done by a God of love. We do know what was Paul's notion of a future state: he expected that in his own lifetime, Christ would come in the clouds, would snatch up the living and raise the dead and lift them up to the clouds and judge them, sending the good — at least, the Christians — to a state of happiness, the bad to a state of misery. We have long outgrown such childish notions, though colored by the words of that good man and the dreams of I know not how many others. You cannot altogether stay the progress of the world; you may retard it; you may quicken it.

Now, we often stop our growth in wisdom and intellectual power, and thus cheat ourselves of the

end we would obtain. This we do because we count ourselves to have apprehended all that we can know. We are proud, and hate to confess ourselves ignorant, or be convicted of mistakes. We take up a notion without examination, thus getting a judgment without knowledge, then obstinately cling to our prejudice. It is a rare thing for a man to change any important opinion after five and forty. That is not because at forty-five he knows all truth, though some seem to think so; it is because the man hardens his mind, and will not hear. He has fallen into the rut of his own prejudice. Here and there you see a man of great, noble ambition, who grows old in living. New thought accrues even in old age. Such a man never grows old; he lives a perennial youth. Truth attends him. A splendid vision goes before him; in the light thereof he walks and is glad. How beautiful it is to see such a man, whom experience has not made blind, nor knowledge hardened; whose wisdom is modest, and while he thanks God for a little, asks for more. Such a man it is a great joy to see. His ideas do not imprison, but make him free. Each truth discovered enlarges his mind; each new star he looks on opens new worlds of stars. Perpetually does he get nearer to truth. Now and then you see such a one in politics, who, when old, has the freshness of youth, and from the

generation he has outlived, gathers all the wisdom they left behind for that generation which has grown up beneath his eye, and so unites in himself the power of both. I have known one Christian minister continually outgrowing the theology in which he was bred. You could trace his progress by the old garments of theology he had cast off, as he outgrew them and went on. Think you he grew less eloquent, less genial, as he grew old? Quite the reverse. Like the fabled swan, his last song was the best he sung. Bigotry shunned his steps; new ideas waited on him; he "by the vision splendid" was "on his way attended," and died young and growing, at more than threescore.

So in religion, in that highest excellence, we often stop in our course and think we have obtained all. We have learned a few truths, and are accustomed to a few duties of religion, and have tasted a little of its satisfactions. Starting, we call ourselves Christians, count ourselves to have apprehended all, and sit down content. Some one comes down from the mountain of his piety and tells what he has seen and known and felt. We call him fool or knave, heretic or unbeliever, at least visionary, a madman, an infidel, or a deist. Now, no man has all truth, each man much error, and he is the weaker and the poorer by each truth he neglects, by each error he welcomes. When a man closes

his mind against the advent of new truth, he turns himself out of the paradise which opened its gates before him. When he shuts his heart against new religious light, he cheats himself all the more. He ceases to advance; he cannot stand still, so visibly falls back and dwindles, withers and shrivels up. What if we had power to check our physical growth, and at eight or ten, satisfied with our stature, should arrest our progress, and stop there, dwarfed and stunted of our growth, and at threescore should have gray hairs and the lines of age on the young figure of the boy. We sometimes see such pygmies; they are shown as curiosities. We often see dwarfs in religion, pygmies in Christianity, not exhibited in shows, but confronting you with their moral ugliness in the street, and glorying in their shame, setting themselves up as types of men, the dwarf mocking at the man. They learned something at their mother's knee. The best part of many a man's wisdom has come to him thence, when she laid her hand, now still in death, on his childish head, and smoothed down his silken and boyish hair, and taught him of God, of conscience, of righteousness, and awaking the devotion of his young heart, bade him fly toward heaven on his half-fledged wings. The boy learns a little of religion, a little of its truth, a little of its duties, and a little of its satisfactions, so full of soothing

charms, so rich in inward peace; even the boy loves these, and goes rejoicing on his boyish way. But soon there are cares, temptations, studies not akin to religion; passions are awakened in him; he gets farther from his mother's arms, but no nearer to truth, no nearer goodness, farther from God. In other things he grows; Science expands his mind; Experience teaches new lessons. He sees farther in intellectual things than his mother saw; but in religion he stops where she left him. He learns nothing new. Perhaps he repeats in manhood the timid prayer which came, spontaneous and graceful, from the child's swelling heart. Now it is short and little, not fit for his growth in mind, more than the blankets which wrapped his limbs in the cradle would fit his body. In old age you find him with palsied knees, with swimming eyes, with feeble hand, aweary for his shroud. He mumbles the same little prayer; he sees no farther, he thinks no deeper, than when a little child at his mother's knee. I have not lived many years, but long enough to see the face of childhood, ingenuous with its peaceful innocence, full of promise as the day-star, beautiful as the morning; to see religion fade out of that face; to see selfishness, rage, and lust unite thereon their hideous scrawl and stamp out God's image with the Devil's blot. My friends, it is a sorry sight. To see a man over whom the sun,

blessed and beautiful, has risen and set for many a day and many a year, over whom the rainbow has spread her wings, and over whom heaven's tent has been nightly pitched for half a century, its myriad lights leading him upward and onward; it is a sad sight to see a man whom grief and joy have governed with alternate sway, who has known the joys of youth, the happiness of home, who has rejoiced in the name of friend, lover, husband, father, — to see him shortened of his growth in religion, contentedly little, impoverished in his soul, dwarfed in spirit, gray-headed, but only a boy. Could we stand in bodies that fairly represented our spiritual growth, so that our virtues and piety could be measured by the eye as our external stature, how we should astonish ourselves, what a wonder we should be to each other! It would appear perhaps that some have grown continually less and less; they shrivel and shrink like a fern in the frost of an autumn night, and crackle and become dust like that same fern in the sun of the next noonday. Oh, it is a sad thought, to ask how many of you have seen lovely ones grow little and less and least. I cannot answer the question. Your own faces tell something of it; God knows the rest.

Now and then you see a man who grows continually in wisdom, in virtue, in piety. He never counts himself to have apprehended all, to have at-

tained a man's estate in religion. Prayerfully he passes on. Little accessions of unexpected strength come to him; for his work is holy, his wife, his children, his church, his God. From the deeps of his own soul, perennial supplies come forth which his wife, his children, his church, his religion, have tried to offer and tried to give. His religion is as a river started from a little fountain, fed by lasting snows. It gradually drinks in supplies as it runs on, grows wider and deeper. Rising above its banks, it blesses meadow and prairie, leaving flowers and fruit where its healing waters touch. It reflects in its tranquil bosom the gleam of the city, the cool majesty of the stars, and at last without noise empties the vast volume of its riches into the boundless sea. Could one such a man lift his serene forehead and stand in the elevation of his well-grown spirit among the rest of us, how like a Colossus would he stand! and we in his shadow would dig our dishonorable graves.

Paul affords one remarkable instance of such a man. Bred in religion a Jew of the strictest sect, and persecuting the Christians, he is yet no slave to his thoughts. He sees the truth of Christianity, at length welcomes it to his heart. His conversion was the condemnation of his former course; but consistency did not frighten him into falsehood. Then he went forward in Christianity.

He passed by Judaizing James, temporizing Cephas, and feared not Jews or Greeks. Nay, he feared not to be wiser to-morrow than to-day. He counted not himself to have apprehended all truth. What he saw, he welcomed and took home, praying devoutly for more, — passing forward to the world of truth which came to him. Of course he lost his old friends among the Jews by the first step; he gained new enemies among the Christians by the next. But God was his friend, truth his counsellor, and wisdom shone down deeper and deeper into his soul. Piety and morality he wished to dwell with him; and each year no doubt saw deeper satisfaction and a holier tranquillity take possession of the man. No doubt he found men enough to say, "Paul, stop there, — you have got it all now. There is but little truth, and you now have all that." Men told him so in the Jewish Church, — ay, in the Christian Church. It is always the sin of sluggish men to do so. This has been one of the sins of the Christian Church. Each little denomination practically takes this for granted, that it has apprehended all truth, all righteousness. A man may be ever so pure, with argument ever so logical, with intuitions deep, beautiful, holy, and true, yet the Church may call him bad names, and bid him go and be damned. What a picture! Bodies of prudent men and foolish men, setting up

as possessors of all truth, as possessed by no error! Let not us enter into such ways; let us remember that it takes all the churches to preach all the gospel; the whole of mankind toiling through infinite ages to preach all truth. Our fathers are barbarians to us, their fathers to them; we shall be in our turn barbarians to coming ages. Let us cleave to all we know is true, and welcome each new guest as it comes from heaven. Still the Spirit speaks for you and me. Truth has a perpetual morning; its sun breaks ever on the world, though we stupidly turn to the west, or close up our windows and refuse to look. The true man joying in his nature never is satisfied with what he has won. What is behind him is little, infinity before. He forgets what is behind; he marches on to the greater life before. An artist, after many a thought and much patient toil, in some proud hour feels his bosom burn, his heart swelling and throbbing. He sees in fancy float before him, carved out in the viewless air, the figure he strives to greet, — the queen of ancient art, or the Mother of Christ, or her that sprung, as fable tells, from the foaming bosom of the sea, a wonder of the deep. He sees this float by in more than mortal loveliness. He toils and spreads it on the canvas, or bids the mimic marble waken into his dream. At last the work is done. Wondering

men behold the finished form, revealing dreams brighter far than this; but he that created this brilliant fancy and copied in stone, a fossil thought, the petrifaction of a great idea, — he has gone off to fairer things, and nobler forms have waited on him. He looks not with satisfaction at his work. Genius cannot look back, cannot repose in its own achievement, but looks forth to greater wonders till age chills the ideas in the fountain of life, and makes the eye dim and the hand to tremble. So must it be with us. Have we done little? Let not that discourage us, but waken us and send us forth, though shamefaced, yet strong to manly progress. Have we done much? Let it be no stimulus to vanity, still less to pride. Let us hope more than we remember, and strive more than we rest. Then shall our life be a triumph. The follies which bewildered, the passions which enslaved us, shall turn to be our servants. What we once despaired of as but a visionary dream — so bright, so fair, so distant, and so high — shall come down to us and bless us evermore. Is there ever a time when the child of God can fold his arms and say, "Lord, I have apprehended; I have done all"?

When Job was a young man, he surpassed his fellows in wisdom, goodness, in every manly grace. The blessing of him that was ready to perish fell

on his ears, for he respected the poor and the needy. The favors of his God did not awaken avarice. The beggar, the orphan, the widow in the land of Uz, nightly thanked God, that had made the sun, the moon, the earth, and Job. But Job's heart waxed contented within him; the shadow of his achievement blasted his aspirations. Then he said, "Lo! I have attained; what more is there for me?" So he but contented himself. He sought no more truth, nor welcomed the angels who rode on the sunbeams, who hung in the lily, or reposed in the fragrance of the flowering grape. The counsellors, with fair majestic face, with thoughts each day about the best, found no notice with Job; he grew no more. So the angel of disease struck him. His joints were bound; his breath was an abhorrence to his friends. Then reproach came into his heart. He moaned as the great deep in his torment. The voice of El Shadai spake to him: "O Job, thou hast lost the splendor of thy manhood resting in what is done. No more be satisfied with thyself. Thou wast but a candle of light; the heaven of suns is over thee. In thy good life hast thou gathered but a pebble-stone, while the shore glitters with pearls and diamonds and gold, each wave disclosing treasures new. Be ashamed, and arise." And Job arose and began anew. Each victory tempted him to new adventures. The fruit of

one good work was the seed of a thousand more. When the angel gathered him to heaven, he towered over men there, taller than Abraham and Moses, and God blessed him and said, "Sit there, my faithful and noblest son; I will make thee Lord over many things."

1844.

XI.

PRAYER AND INTERCOURSE WITH GOD.

I prayed, and understanding was given me. — Wisdom of Solomon vii. 7.

IN all the forms of worship into which the one universal religion is divided, a large place has been set apart for prayer. It has been a doctrine dear to the human race, that man can come into the mysterious presence of the Infinite One whose power is the strength of the world and whose wisdom pours out the wondrous beauty which encompasses and enriches the earth and sky and all that they contain, whose love blesses what it made and beautifies. It is a doctrine dear to the heart of mankind, that through prayer we can hold communion with the soul of all, receive revelations from the very God, and be inspired by him. The belief in this intercourse with our Father rises spontaneous in the simple heart of childhood, and, as instinctive trust, swells outward in the newborn soul. In primitive nations of the world's infancy, the same instinctive trust appears. In all the forms of religion you find this. It meets you

with the savage and the civilized; in all states of progress; in all the degrees of growth in religion, — that of fear, of hope, and of love. As the race grows wiser, it does not outgrow this; as it grows better and more pious, it places the more confidence therein, appeals oftener to the abstract Justice, Truth, Love. Philosophy comes up, with its lessons learned from painful thought, and confirms therewith the impulsive sentiments that rise unbidden in primeval hearts. Yet there is a period in which men doubt thereof. The man has outgrown the instinctive sentiment of boyhood; he has not attained the lofty philosophy of manhood. He once thought that prayer moved God; he sees the wrong of that, and doubts even what it can mean; but he grows again, recovers the spontaneous nature of the child, and wins the serious forecast of the man there. Prayer is still precious as ever, — alike a means that helps us forward, and an end we rejoice in as good in itself. In different churches of the world you shall find it clothing itself in various forms. In various stages of a man's progress there are various degrees of this. You read the works of men famed for this holy life, — men that rise far above the common crowd in goodness and in piety; you shall find that they speak of the power of prayer to purify and to refine, to exalt the man. They dwell on it in song

and oration, telling men it calms and soothes and heals and blesses the wounded heart. They shall tell you that it lifted them to God, armed them with strength for the sore trials of the world, lifted them up when fallen, overtaken by sin, and sent them forth anew on their pilgrimage, girding their loins with strength and anointing their shield for victory at last. Did these men tell idle dreams? Bunyan, Fox, Fénelon, Ware, Channing, with their noble friends of kindred soul, though differing in the garb that clothed their faith, all tell of this, — not in madness, but in the sobriety of holiness and the calmness of reasonable men who knew what they spoke, and wrote what they oft had felt. Such men represent the self-consciousness of mankind on matters of inward religion; and their life gives weight to their words.

Perhaps it is difficult to *tell* what is the soul of prayer, but it is not difficult to *feel* what it is; it is the man's aspiring after some higher good. Dissatisfied with ourselves, we turn toward the ideal of all perfection, and in thought fly toward that sublime and universal presence which opens ever before us. Dissatisfied with the world, sick of its disappointments and weary with chasing its follies, we turn toward the fountain of all spiritual influence and there renew our strength, and come

back again strong for our duty, patient under trials and capable of all that Providence demands of us. There are external things that help to prayer, — a chosen time, a place endeared to you by the old and long-cherished associations of days gone by, a form to which you have been used, words that you pour forth in the eloquent moment of your devotion; but these are not the prayer. That is deeper than the outer helps. It is not in the time nor place, the form nor the words, that prayer resides. That lies deeper still. It is the sentiment within the heart, confiding in its Father, and seeking a good not realized as yet. It may use the words of another; and as the young eaglet follows its parent eagle up the sky, be aided thus by such as go before. It may use the first words it thinks out itself anew, or with no words; but thoughts and feelings only may pray on, and none the less come close to God and return to earth laden with blessings from that divine presence, as the bee comes back from the early flowers of spring. It is not at all times that a man feels or can feel this aspiration after greater good; so it is not at all times that he can pray in his highest elevation. Nay, though he use the words of devotion, the soul of prayer breathes not out from the lips that move. The robin and the thrush sing not all the year, but only when they feel the genial morn of new crea-

tive life. When they have no song to sing, no sentiment to put in song, they are silent then, and do not profane their voice. There are times when we feel cold and dead, — we know not why; the perishable body weighs down the mind; we can do little more than with the publican smite upon our breast and say, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Our feeling of humiliation keeps us low. So in our common daily state, when nothing interrupts the usual ebb and flow of our affairs, it often happens that we desire but little, are contented with ourselves, and seem to expect but little. Then our prayers will be mainly prayers of silentness or prayers of memory, — repetitions for what we once brought back when with more vigorous wing we mounted up to God. The brightest day has its night; the August summer ends in winter at the last. But things occur that rouse us from our common state. Some unlooked-for good fortune befalls us; some new hope is born into our household; some sorrow lays waste our hopes; sickness invades our household; death seizes some friend, — a parent, wife, or child, — tearing them at once from our sight; some sin, perhaps, that we in a rash moment committed before high heaven, — these things awake us from our usual state, and open with rough or gentle hand the gate of heaven. We see the littleness of our attainments, and look

up to our ideal for something more permanent than our friends, something more exalted than our own character. Then we fly toward our ideal. We rise above our actual state. We look back on the things we have striven for, — the honors, the distinctions of life, the poor vanities for which so often we have wasted our strength, — they seem all little and without worth. We look back on the real good things that we have done, — on the plain humble duties of our daily life; on our efforts to help those dependent on us; our attempts to control our lives by goodness and piety, to live a blameless life, though with great denial of ourselves, — and these seem beautiful, priceless in our sight and in the sight of Infinite Justice and never-ending love. We look back on wasted opportunities; on gifts given by God, yet perverted by us; on sins that we have committed, known only to ourselves, — sins committed presumptuously or in some unlucky moment when the sophistry of passion has blinded our eyes, — then we see all these things as they are. We mourn at the waste; we weep at the sin; but we look up to that fair ideal which comes upon our sight, and with great resolution long to re-ascend, to climb farther up, to be what we contemplate. We look back on the disasters which trouble us, on our disappointments and losses. When we looked for a storm, a rainbow

spread its wings, a promise of fairer skies. We fly out of our common consciousness into the higher realm of truth, goodness, religion, and in our thoughts we clothe ourselves with these virtues. We see the fact of our life, little and poor and low. We see too the idea of a perfect life, its beauty, its fitness for us. We *are* in that moment the excellence we contemplate. We wish to be so forever; that is our prayer. We may use words; they help our thought; they are often the counters with which we think; or we may do all this without words. Let us each use what suits him best. The form is personal, but the spirit of prayer is universal.

This exercise of prayer in this sense, as we feel it now and then, is powerful and deep, full of strong excitement; not rapturous, but calm, tranquil, and composing. Thoughts flash in upon the man that come not in his humbler hours. New truths come oftenest in these brief moments of prayer, for the man is in his highest state of intellectual work. Then, too, that element within which feels and lives, desires the perfect, and that too which wills, — all these are powerfully moved. It is no wonder, then, that deeper thoughts and feelings infinite do stir and burn within us at such an hour. It is in a lofty mood, above the common drowsiness of life, that the poet strikes out his

words of electric fire, the "canticles of joy and woe;" that the world repeats "the litanies of nations." It is in no vulgar mood of mind or heart that the artist, painter, or sculptor, or he who on the viewless air carves out the graceful thought that speaks in music unto man, — it is in no sleepy mood that he achieves all this. It is with great intensity of thought that the philosopher, long pondering over the problems of soul, discovers at last the solving truth which makes the riddle plain; so the real prayer which shapes a man's future life, and solves his riddle, comes from a deep action of the whole man. The preparations are made, the apparatus ready, and all is long awaiting; but in one moment the wires are joined, and the electric spark flames forth. Water lay about the altar, but fire came, and kindling the sacrifice, licked up the stream. Prayer is spiritual study, a vehement action of the man aspiring after excellence. It is to the Christian man what the hour of mental action is to the poet and philosopher, — the period of creative work. As the poet and philosopher have their hours of interior work, when thoughts come flashing upon them with such a force and beauty as in common hours they never come; as in these times (brief though they be) they project out of their hearts their mighty work, — so has the religious man, or he who strives to become

such, his hours, when the spirit of devotion comes over him and touches his deepest heart. He feels the greatness of man, but the littleness of his own achievement, — how little when measured by that vast capability he feels and knows! His ideal rises higher than ever, but for that reason is never clearly seen. His valley of humiliation seems lower yet, measured by the stars. He sees the fact of his life, how unlike that ideal! he is a dwarf, stunted of his proper growth. He rises in fancy up to this ideal; for the moment, he becomes it, and *is* what he should be. This moment is the idealization of his life. He sees himself, not as he seems, not as you see him, but as he really is in his nature. He resolves to be what God made him to be, and for one moment he is the complete man. Common cares appear beautiful, common duties desirable; great difficulties seem little. He thinks to make them always so. He asks the aid of God in his enterprise. His nature is deeply moved, and an abiding impression is made on his heart. The iron character of the man is molten, and the image of heaven is stamped thereon, and the hardening iron holds it forever.

Now, it is no fiction that in such moods we have a connection with the God of all more really than in our common hours. We break away from habit; we see ourselves as we are, our faults, fol-

lies, littlenesses, sins. Underneath all we feel the greatness of our nature, that seems as the ocean, so broad, so deep, so strong; our personal character as the little streams which run down from the sand. The vast heaven lies mirrored in the trickling stream and in the ocean's broad expanse. We feel the presence of the all-surrounding Father, who is truth and love; and he, as truth and love, comes down into our heart, is made manifest, and abides with us. We have a feeling of his nearness, a repose of heart in him. This is communion with God. New truth, new revelation, flows into us. We make his thought our thought. We see truths not by reflection, but intuitively they start up in us. There is no change on God's part; he is ever the same. But there is a great change on our part. We feel and see his presence, perceive his truth, and welcome it. The effect on us is deep and beautiful. The mind is made thereby steady and composed, for it works not against, but according to its nature. It is not merely a communing with ourselves, but with God. We get not only what we carry out, but more. Every prayer will not be a communion with God. We do not always get up so high, — as the tree blossoms but once a year; but wisdom comes through prayer, understanding is given. We know ourselves better, for in such moments we see ourselves with something

of the impersonality in which God sees us, and feel not only the character of the one man, but the nature of man in us. The sophistry of passion, of self-love, of pride, is seen through; we forget our selfish onesidedness; we see our nature as well as our character. The moral sense is aided by such efforts. We breathe the cool, calm air, and judge not with the partiality common to our self-love, nor with the despair which failures bring, but with an internal judgment of justice and truth. We hope much of ourselves, for we see that our sin was a mistake, a failure. We resolve to wander no more, but pursue straight forward the one right path. We feel a deep confidence in God, to whom we have thus approached so near. We feel and know that he will order all things for our good, will lead us home at last. How can we doubt at such a moment? In the hour of most imminent peril, when thus we turn to God, his angel comes to strengthen us; in our agony heaven opens; and better than ten legions of angels, he is with us and has not left us alone.

In such moments, too, our charity toward others is made strong and active. When we ask to be restored to God, how can we refuse to restore ourselves to our brother? All high affections of man fly in a flock toward God. Waken one of the Christian graces, — Faith, Hope, or Charity, —

all the rest awake; for they have but one life, and when one wakes and lives, then do all the others also. Would you know the effect of habits of prayer of this sort? Some of you know it already; some of you have seen and felt the power. But to make it apparent, watch the history and see the end of some man who lives at random, careless where the stream of life shall bear him, with no ideal of a life, with no aspirations and with no prayer. I speak not of words; he may deluge his prayers with them. See how he drifts on in life, unsatisfied and unsatisfying; aiming at little and attaining no more; successful in petty schemes of personal aggrandizement, but coming out of the world less of a man than he came into it. Look at such an one; see how manliness fades away in him. His face becomes vulgar, his life vulgar, because his soul first became a common, a gossiping, a trifling, a little, and a vulgar soul. You see enough of such men anywhere. Contrast such an one with the man who set out with an idea, who pondered often in his course and looked up and looked forward; who measured himself, not by the men about him, but by the high ideas of justice, piety, and love; who took praise as penance, and lived above ambition, not asking praise of men, but desiring it of God; who sought not only the company of wise men and good men, but looked in prayer to com-

panionship with God, and in the light thereof saw his own character, aims, and hopes, and drew down inspiration from God most high to cheer and light him through this world. What a difference between the two! What a difference in the life employed here, in the result achieved, in the character which they carry out of this world! If the sentiment of prayer be carefully cherished, it will color with its own beauty all this outward and this inner life we lead. It will lift us now and then to God, and we shall pray great prayers, and see great truths, and feel the greatness of religious consolation steal down into our hearts. We shall not always rise to our loftiest elevation of thought or feeling,—nay, we shall seldom get so high. Once in a year perhaps, perhaps but once in a life. Yet from that height shall we finally see the green scions of life that we carry in our bosoms budding, blossoming, and becoming fragrant and full of fruit. So the water-lily buds at the bottom of some stagnant pool or in the oozy margent of a languid stream, and at length lifts up its head to the waters, opens its cup, unfolds its saffron and its snow to the genial wooing of the sun and air, and for a while gives out the fragrance it has long shut in; is fertilized by its genial dalliance with the sky, then crooks and contracts its crinkling stem, sinks down beneath the water's top, rises no more, but silently

matures its fruit, and in the unconscious water scatters abroad its seeds, the fairest of Nature's flowers.

There are seasons of the day which invite a man to pause and commune with himself; yes, to rise above that, to commune with his Father, who seeth in public and in secret too. Morning calls you to a new day; it will bring its trials, its temptations. Old ones will come again; new ones may break freshly on you. Is it not wise when you begin, fresh from repose, your daily task, to pause to consider, to ask, "What will be my dangers to-day? Shall I engage in only what is right, or is there not danger also of doing that which is wrong?" Is it not wise in such an hour to rise into that spiritual world which overlooks and overhangs our common life? Is it not wise to lift up your heart to him who gave you all that you are, to feel though but for a moment that you are praising God, whose beautiful laws shall bless you if you keep them? When night summons you to repose, as darkness draws a curtain, fold on fold, about the earth, and the mysterious stars lead up the thoughts to worlds higher and more tranquil than the sun, is it not well also to pause and ask, "What have I done? What have I been? What duty left undone? Has the day brought unkind feelings, or been witness to unworthy deeds?" Is it not well to rise

up to the thought of the beautiful presence of God, to feel yourself at rest with him? Conceive to yourself two men. Let one pursue this course, though but for ten minutes each day, and those caught in the pauses of his toil. The other, who thinks never of such things, lies down at night like the tired ox in his crib, and like him rises in the morning, alike regardless of the idea he should contemplate. What different men shall these two men become as the years try them! Which, think you, shall be the more manly, which the more free?

It is not the shadow of prayer that I speak of, but the substance, the spirit thereof; not words, but life. Why tell of its effects? It is its own glad recompense. It is the poetry of religion, not less true than the plain prose, but only more beautiful and touching to the heart. Prayer is the idealization of the Christian's growth, the poetry of his holy life, the blossoming of his religion. It does not give a man raptures, but it does afford real solid delights. Let any man, young or old, set apart one half-hour, or the half of that, for communing with himself and his God each day; let him shut out the world and open his windows toward truth and God, and seriously think and really pray, — it will be not without rich fruit in his life. He will give over sin, will constantly ascend; and when from his highest intercourse with the Divine

he comes back, he, like Moses, will not know how his life and look are radiant with his soul, but his prayer will shine in his daily life. To his highest height he will seldom rise, however. His daily prayers may be but repetitions of his one great prayer, but he shall go long in the strength of that one, and long find peace. I am sure that some of you know well the meaning and the worth of this. You have felt the consciousness of weakness and found strength, perhaps the consciousness of sin, and have found comfort even for that. I know that you have felt that God is near you, with you, in you; and from your prayer you have come back comforted, equal to any fate, ready to live. Would it were so with all; that the young man full of hope, impulsive energies driving him on, the world's business inviting his work,—that the young man might pause in this hurrying life of ours, retire within the secret place of his soul, kneel at the fountain of living waters, and be baptized with the spirit of strength that he might win victories in life! Would that the old man might pause till the whirlwind has gone by, and lend an ear to the still small voice which speaks to the man in prayer! for it is the voice of God that calls to rest.

1845.

XII.

CHRISTIANITY IN CONTACT WITH HEATHENISM.

Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him. — Acts xxviii. 30.

EVERY new thought is a revolution; a great thought, a great revolution. Every contrivance of man, a printing press or steam-engine, a church or a State, was a thought before it became a thing. Silently the idea comes out of the obscurity of one man's mind and incarnates itself among powers that be in the world, changing all other things about it. Men try to disguise this fact from themselves and from one another; but it is written by God on the leaf of fate that truth shall displace all falsehood, and therewith bring to the ground whatever rests on such a foundation. Truth builds up its new edifice on its own deep-laid basis, to shelter men and provoke their admiration. It wars with and destroys all not in accordance with itself and its institutions. Examples enough of this truth shall we see everywhere.

Jesus stood up, a new fact in the world, just from God, brand new on the earth, and he was a revolution. He stood on the one side, and Judaism stood on the other. The two were mutually contradictory; they could not be reconciled; they could no longer live together. Yet the Jews reckoned themselves the foremost people of the world. They *were* the foremost to reject Christianity, for they saw that Judaism and Christianity could not dwell safely together; they would not intermingle; the spirit of the two was terribly hostile.

The church at Jerusalem never flourished much. Paul and Peter had to beg contributions at Ephesus, Pisidia, Antioch, and even in Corinth, for the mother church at Jerusalem. That was not all. That church clung to Judaism to the last. Christ said, New wine in new bottles. The Christian church at Jerusalem put it into the old bottles of Judaism, and declared it would keep in none but old bottles,— the older the safer. The consequences were easy to foresee: the bottles burst; the wine ran out, — spoiled, besides, before it ran out; and both perished together. The church at Jerusalem never came to much; it was a Jewish church always. Its first leaders were circumcised Jews; they clung to Hebrew rites, forms, and old wives' fables, as a boy that cannot swim clings to a handful of floating sea-weed, and goes down

with it in his grasp. So went down the church at Jerusalem. You will ask, "Why so? Had they not the chairs of the apostles, the first gospel in Hebrew, etc.?" Yes, they had all that and more. They had the sepulchre of Christ, but Christianity they had not. They were wedded to the old; they said, "All of the Old Testament is from God, and we must never let go the show-bread of tradition for the sake of the real bread of life, which Christ gives us out of heaven." They sewed the new cloth of Christianity, in its native virgin holiness, to the old garments of the Jews, which had been worn in Egypt, in the desert, not without holes, and were soiled with the wear and tear of two thousand years. No wonder the new "took from the old," and the rent became worse. There were two parties among the Christians, very soon after the death of Jesus, — as soon as Christianity had any development and the new Christians became self-conscious. There were the Jewish party and the Liberal party; Peter's party and Paul's party. The Jewish party insisted that Christianity was only a modified Judaism; that Moses was as good as the Messiah; and he that took the latter took the first, and became a Jew before he was a Christian. It seems remarkable to us, but he who knows mankind well is seldom astonished at an absurdity. The Liberal party left Christianity

more free, did not put the little Jewish girl's garments on the full-grown woman. They gave her a bridal robe suited to her stature and becoming her beauty. The Jewish party among the Christians was a curse then to the world. It was the smell of the mould that clung about the feet of the Christian tree. That party has been dead more than sixteen hundred and fifty years ; but its successors live now, and are to Christianity what their forefathers were then, — a curse. Paul grew tired of this party. They fettered him with their phylacteries, tried to feed him with their show-bread ; made him comply, shave his head, serve tables, and walk after the ordinances. He tried it for a while, and became a Jew to the Jews that he might gain them ; but finding it better to be Paul than a Jew, he turned off to the Gentiles. It is curious to see that all his trouble came from the Jews, the foremost nation of the earth, as they thought themselves.

At Antioch, in Pisidia, he preached Christianity in the synagogue. The Jews went off. The Gentiles asked to hear it again ; they heard and were glad ; but the Jews drove Paul out of their courts. So they did at Iconium, at Lystra, at Thessalonica, at Berea, at Corinth, when heathen Gallio drove them out of the courthouse. They it was that seized him in the temple at Jerusalem, when he was complying with the old rites, not as a Christian,

but as a Jew. They swore an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had slain Paul. They gave him all his perils, drove him from his country, and forced him to appeal to Cæsar. These things are instructive, and are rich in lessons for this day, and days yet to come, no doubt. They drove Paul away; and he went unto the Gentiles. It served him no longer to be a Jew to the Jews. It was a pity that he ever tried to be anything but Paul. He goes to Rome a prisoner, at the hands of his own nation. Behold the Christianity rejected by "the foremost people of all the world," goes to the heathen to make its fortune.

Christianity came to Rome in the person of Paul, in a period of great revolution. Men had outgrown their religion. No, not their religion; there is no outgrowing that. They had outgrown their theology, and become disgusted with religion, for they thought it was theology and nothing more. The Greek philosophy was getting taught in Rome; not understood, for the Romans never understood it much. They were a practical people who never took to philosophy. It was a period of great confusion, a crisis in the world's affairs, when religion seemed to have faded out of the popular mind, only the show of religion taking its place. There were great men and good men and pious men, no doubt, in Rome at that time; but the popular

attention did not set toward religion. It was the worst place, a worldly man would have said, to bring a new religion. Roman literature was fully mature; its fruits hung rich and ripe over the heads of the multitude, — far over their heads; for the people there was no literature save the edict of the Consul proclaiming a new levy of soldiers, or of the Prætor announcing a new show of gladiators, or a feast for the people. Behold Christianity at Rome in collision with the old religion of the State, with the new philosophy of the Greeks, with the scepticism of the cultivated, the licentiousness of the debauchee, the arrogance of the proud, and the squalid wretchedness of the proletary, — the slaves who crawled as worms in the filth of the world's capital, which was also the sink of the world. Here was Christianity to stand or fall. Paul appealed to Cæsar. He dwelt a whole year in his own hired house with the soldiers who kept him, as the fashion was in those days, and taught Christianity to all comers. They show the house at Rome to this day, in the Corso under a church, where he dwelt those two memorable years. It was a curious spectacle. The most important man then living comes to Rome a prisoner, and lives two years with the soldiers that kept him in his own hired house. The world seldom sees such a spectacle. It might see it often, would the world

clear its eyes. Then came the controversy between heathenism and Christianity. Christ condemned Judaism directly, fittingly, and in good set speech; nothing could be plainer. He condemned heathenism by implication, — only by implication, for he lived in a Jewish and not a Gentile country, and spoke of the sins and follies rife and about him.

At Rome all the old religions had found a home; they were mutually tolerant of one another. The heathen Romans are hardly treated at the hands of our Christian divines, and all religious merit denied them. If men were more in the habit of reading before they condemned, their sentence would be of a little more value. The popular religion at Rome taught there was a God, to be served with justice, righteousness, a good life; that there was a future state of retribution; that God judged all nations; that man was an immortal soul. But they, like the Jews, coupled religion with idle forms, and often made it to consist in those forms. Foolish priests did so; let us pity their blindness. Wise men laughed at the popular forms and the popular beliefs. It had become fashionable to disbelieve the popular form of religion, and not yet fashionable to have any positive belief to take its place. The popular mythologies of the Romans, like those of the Jews, ascribed unworthy actions often to God. A man can seldom be better than his concep-

tion of the God he worships; a nation never. The Roman mythologies, like all others, had an effect on the people, often a bad effect. Then, too, but a low value was set on man. This is the characteristic feature of the old civil policy of Greece and Rome, — that the State was all, and the individual nothing. He was for the State, — not it for him. It had absolute rights; he only derivative, secondary rights, — nay, not rights, but privileges only. The "rights of man" is a phrase not many hundred years old, wholly unknown, I think, in those days. Slavery was reckoned as natural an institution in Rome as it is at this day[1] in South Carolina. It was deemed more than patriarchal, a natural institution. However, it was not peculiar; nearly all nations held to it, though not the Jews in Christ's time. The father had an unconditioned and uncontrolled right over the fortune and life of his son so long as that father lived. Women had no rights. Powers they surely had, — the conquerors of the world felt that in every limb, — but no legal rights. The condition of women is the darkest side of ancient civilization. It was nowhere worse than at Rome.

With the wealth that successful war brought to Rome, came luxury in one class and the most squalid poverty in another. Out of luxury there came the sect of the Epicureans, who placed the chief good in

[1] In 1845. — Ed.

pleasure. Such were most of the wealthy. Mæcenas was a type of them. As the natural antithesis there came the Stoics, who denied that pain was an evil. Hard, iron men were they, who comprised in their ranks most of the bold virtue of the State, and most too of the patriots. In the decline of faith there sprang up the Sceptics, who thought nothing could be known certainly; even natural philosophy was to them one of the most uncertain things. The most useful sect possibly was the Eclectics, men that chose what they saw good in the other three, — Epicureans, Stoics, or Sceptics. Of this class was Cicero, the last great man that Rome produced, — a diplomatic man, moreover, who in his care for the public never forgot himself, but a man who certainly foresaw many of the truths of Christianity. Here, too, were followers of almost every mode of religion the world had heard of: the worshippers of Thor, from Britain and Saxony, the Celts and the Cimbri, the Spaniard, the Umbrian, the Fire-worshipper, and the Egyptian, — all met together. Human sacrifices were offered in the Forum before the birth of Christianity, and till Paul's coming to Rome. Conquered nations came as slaves openly; their deities came in secret, but as masters. Rome was a miniature of the world, its nations, its religion, its wealth, its wants. Behold Christianity at issue with this class of religions! Here is the profession of Christianity as Paul set it

forth, — I purposely leave off many technical matters which he may have laid stress on, and talk only of the more important he put forth: "There is but one God of all nations. He is no respecter of persons, but looks equally on Jew and Gentile, bond and free. All distinctions of race and rank are nothing before him. He has planted his law in the hearts of all, — Gentile and Jew. All have departed from that law, — the Jews, who had much, and the Greeks, who had little. Each knew the way and the truth and the life, but departed therefrom. They became slaves to the flesh, and received the wages of sin, — death. Look around," said he, "and behold your society, your impotent laws, your idols that are nothing, your great men that are confounded. But God in mercy sent Jesus to seek and save. Before him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. Trust no longer in the flesh to work its unrighteousness; live to the Spirit; overcome evil with good; follow after righteousness; let good works abound; abhor evil; cling to the good. The best three things are, faith in God, hope in yourself, and charity toward men; and the last is the best of the three. Offer no more sacrifices; Jesus is the last sacrifice, enough for all men. Glory not in man, nor in your philosophy, nor in the old wives' stories of the Jews; but seek the truth, hold fast to what is good. The letter killeth; the spirit enlivens; old

things are passed away, — all is become new. Be no longer slaves to the law of sin and death, but Christ's free men. All the world is full of burdens; let the strong help the weak. Judgment shall overtake us all, Christ come back in the clouds, the world soon end, and we all have spiritual bodies. Repent in time; God waits, and Christ intercedes. God's Spirit shall help you."

Such were the chief doctrines Paul set forth at Rome. Institutions were little; man was great; the universal spirit of Christianity took the place of the little patriotism and devotion to the State which hitherto belittled men and cursed them. Never was there a stronger antithesis than here. On the one side, confusion and uncertainty among doctrines, in the hands of the most despotic power; on the other, the most positive doctrines most positively laid down, but by a man who lived in a hired house, a prisoner kept by soldiers. The old spirit was narrow as the walls of a city; the new broad as heaven itself. Soon Christianity began to do its work; as the fire shines in the night, so truth among men. At Paul's second captivity, some years after the first, he tells us that his bonds were manifest in the Emperor's palace; but still few famous men came over to Christianity. In the first two and a half centuries perhaps not one of the more distinguished families of Rome, but first

there came many of the humbler, and next of the more wealthy and cultivated. In a very few years the number of Christians was great, the main work was done. Humble men went first, then the greater, and at last the greatest. What wrought the change, think you, and led the heathen of Rome to become Christians? If men be as we are so often told, it was strange for them to forsake so easy a faith as the old and embrace so hard a one as the new, especially when it cost something besides. He that became a Christian at Rome did not sit down in a respectable church, in his comfortable pew, and listen to a learned man flattering his vices and gliding smoothly over the surface of things, never hurting men's feelings, never touching a private or a public sin, — no such thing then. The early Christian followed strong but rude leaders of a despised nation and a sect abhorred. He worshipped in the tombs under the city, in secret, at night. He went with his fellows, and together they blessed God. Toil and trouble followed him. He took the vow of poverty and disgrace. He lived a clean life, holy, acceptable unto God, — a reasonable service, but a hard one. There was nothing in Christianity to tempt the senses; no pomp in the streets, no famous men to command respect, no costly temple gleaming under the Italian sun to amaze the young and fix

the heart; no promise of respectability to allure men. What could have made men Christians? Some say it was a miracle; that Peter's shadow and Paul's handkerchief cured the sick, and so the multitude said, "Christianity must needs be true." O my brethren, it was no such miracle! Men saw the truth in Christianity; they felt it in their hearts; they saw too the men that set it forth, — real men, sincere men, who preached Christianity with their lives and with their lips. Christianity was opposed. "It is atheism," said the priests, "sedition; the next generation will be bad men." Persecutions came. Christians shed willingly their blood. They had given their lives before as witnesses of the truth. Every martyr was a new apostle; hundreds were baptized with his blood. It is in red that Christianity was published at Rome, and with that which does not soon fade out of the world. The gospel was a red-letter book. Humble men looked on when some father was torn by the victors from the arms of wife and child, and his head smote off. They talked with one another, these rude men in the market-place, while the public servants gathered up the dust spread there to absorb the Christians' blood, and carried it off — an ass-load in baskets — to throw into the Tiber. "Why is this?" they asked. "He worshipped the God of the Nazarenes," was the reply. "But

how?" They followed home the widow and the orphan to their damp dwelling in some little filthy lane or in the garret of some huge castle of poverty, and saw how the Christians worshipped with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another. They went off and said, "Write me among the Christians; it is a good tree that bears good fruit." Persecutions could not put down Christianity; that is the miracle. I don't know what powers the apostles had, and care little; I do know that they spoke truth and lived it, and that is the reason that they prevailed as only speakers and livers of truth can prevail.

Before long, half the Roman people were Christians. Vain are laws and vain are swords against Christianity. Rome had conquered the world; its greatest gain was Christianity, more than from the Greek philosophy. From Egypt, Rome brought sphinxes; from Greece, letters, philosophy, arts; from Judea, Christianity. Christianity was the better nature of man, — human goodness, human piety, human religion, working in a human way. Soon you see the effect of this new element in the laws of the world. The first Christians would not fight, nor serve idols, nor attend the bloody spectacles which formed the amusement of the people, nor commit the popular crimes. They practised active obedience to God's law, passive resistance

to man's sinful commands. They recorded their protests against the wickedness of the age, as Michael Angelo his against indifferent painting, by an example of a great life. There it is written at this day for the world's lesson.

Soon you see the effect of Christianity extending from the cellar or the garret of the martyr's family to whole masses of men. The laws were affected; precedents were more and more disregarded; and equity took the place of absurd traditions. Fathers lost the power of tyranny over their sons; milder laws were made to protect slaves; and Christianity proceeded to annihilate slavery. Then the condition of women began to improve. Paul saw but half of Christianity; witness all he says of slavery and of women. He added a great deal of error. But it was some merit for him to see that half; a greater merit to live it out when he saw it. Soon it began to be seen that man was more than the State; that it was for him, not he for it; and the new spirit of universal love took gradually the place of little patriotisms. It began to be seen that all men were equal before God; that all deserved the same chance on earth; that he was the greatest who did the most good; that though men make laws, God only made righteousness and justice and truth, and that these only were men obliged to keep, say the laws what they will. Read Paul's

Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, Galatians, Colossians, Corinthians, and compare his words with the precepts that governed the Roman world. What a difference! Let me note one thing, — the disposition to labor for another's good. Rome produced great men; her armies went to the ends of the earth; the world trembled before her consuls. Rome went to Gaul, to Nubia, to Colchis, and to Thule itself, — for fame, for gold, to learn the religion of a savage tribe, or to gather larger fish from the Euxine Sea; but all Rome cannot furnish an example of one man going to teach another truth, to do a strange people good. Christianity began with that, — men that asked nothing for self, but gave all for man. There was the difference between the universal love of Christianity and the limited selfishness of the old civilization. This new spirit soon made itself visible in the Roman State. But, alas! mankind was not far enough advanced to appreciate this; as the Hebrews, escaping out of Egypt, robbed their foes of gold and silver ornaments, sighed for the flesh-pots of their bondage, and, wishing to return, made a new image of their old idol and worshipped it, so did the world turn back, soon after the first welcome of Christianity, and sentenced themselves to remain in the wilderness, with the promised land of Christianity before them still. After the death of the

apostles, Christianity went back, Rome regained her hold, — not entirely, but in part, — and holds it to this day. You and I may see deeper in Christianity than Paul saw. We may rise beyond his limitations; for he is but the servant through whom we believe. But if we live, you and I, as faithful as he, true to truth as far as we see it, true in heart and true in life, not complying with the wrong that we know is wrong, shall not we too do a work, — a work that will not merely affect ourselves, but others too? We are not called on to leave father and mother, to be shut up in prison, and by our death to bear witness to Christianity; but here, in the place of our daily work, in the midst of our families, in the street, the shop, the farm, to bear witness by our life. This is always the more important martyrdom; the living witness is more than the dying one. Let our Christianity be like that in Rome, — a great life lived out before men's eyes. That is the most eloquent of gospels, and that is in each man's power. God asks but two things of you and me; that is, truth and righteousness. With them we shall conquer a Rome for ourselves, with them move the world. We need not wait. There is no time like time present, no place like that of our daily work.

1845.

XIII.

LOW AIMS AND LOFTY.

After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither. — Rev. iv. i.

THERE is a voice speaking out of heaven like a trumpet to every man, "Come up hither, for this is your destination, and your welfare." Some hear it and heed the voice; others fear to listen. He that regards it has a lofty aim, and he that neglects it a low one. The life is like the aim, lofty or low; and the end like the life. One man expects much of himself and finds it, another expects little that is good or great or fair, and gets no more. It is with life as with agriculture: one man gains much that is good from a small surface, another little from a great surface, and that little poor. Into the great seed-field of time has God turned us all. We sow as we will, but reap as we sow, — much from much, little from little, nought from nothing. If you will ask, "Why did Oliver and Jane come out of the world with so little,

when they were both so well born?" the answer will be, "They had a low aim to start with; they did not elevate their ideal as they went forward; and at the last, when they were what they wished to become, it was found not worth the being." Most men aim to be as good as others about them; to pursue the beaten track, right or wrong; to favor the popular opinion, swear by the public religion, and live the public morals, committing only such sins as are respectable and decent. Many seemed satisfied to think they have made the world no worse; yet this satisfaction is not left for all. Some do make it worse, though possibly no man ever lived who said to himself, "Go to now, I will make the world a worse place, and men and women more wretched for my living, so that my memory shall be cursed till the world end." It is not by deliberate purpose that men grow base, injure the world, or dwindle into littleness. No man, knowing well that he came into the world an angel, ever wished seriously to creep out of it as a worm. It is by low aims that men dwarf their spirits and become worms.

Elisha the prophet looked on Hazael the Syrian, and wept, for he saw the evil which Hazael would bring upon Isaael; but Hazael said, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this?" If you and I could look with a prophet's eye on this young man

or that young woman, we should often weep at seeing the good gifts and opportunities afforded them and the mean and little results they would achieve therewith. They would say, each of them, "It cannot be. Is thy servant a dog that he should neglect such opportunities?" The answer would be, "No, he is not now that; but just such a dog will he make of himself to do these things."

The state of society about us is such as tends to form a character of a certain medium goodness. If one sinks below that, he is not readily pardoned, unless very successful in his calling, or a man of extraordinary abilities, in which case the greatness of the person or the success makes atonement with the public for the littleness of the virtue. But while it favors this medium righteousness, it is quite unfavorable to the formation of a good Christian character; I mean a really manly character. Few dare to be wise or good or manly above the popular mark. Such is the awe men have of public opinion that few dare resist it. We in Boston exhibit the strange paradox of a public that has the greatest degree of civil liberty, the smallest respect for the officers that govern us, and at the same time the very least individual liberty, having the profoundest respect for public opinion, right or wrong. As citizens, we live in a

republic and have the greatest civil freedom, scorning the name of subject; but as men, as individuals, we live in a despotism, and must act, think, and live just as our masters bid, with little social freedom and less individual freedom of soul. In public opinion there is little tolerance for any unusual virtue, unusual goodness or piety, even unusual wisdom. Self-denial for money, place, or fame we appreciate; for wisdom, goodness, usefulness in the highest sense, we neither understand nor allow. Heroism of the flesh, and for the flesh, is at a premium in New England; heroism of the soul, and for the soul, is little inquired for. The world covertly sets a bounty on compliance with its ways. Thus it does a service to the cause of progress and humanity; for doubtless this rigorous intolerance of public opinion, like sharp discipline in an army, restrains many that are below the average and keeps the stragglers from deserting or being lost. But it represses also the noblest spirits and degrades them to the dull level of the average virtue and intelligence.

A young man comes into life with lofty aims; he has a great ideal of justice, usefulness, goodness. In trade or in the professions or any of the callings of life, he says: "Here are the great principles of justice; I will keep them. I will live in harmony with Nature, doing justice to the body; in harmony

with man, doing justice to the mind and heart; in harmony with God, doing justice also to the soul. I will know no tricks in trade; I will give a day's wages for a day's work, and will take from the world no more than I give the world an equivalent for. If I get rich, it shall be by creating wealth, not robbing others of their creation. However much I receive from men, I will still keep them in my debt, by never receiving so much as I righteously earn from them. I will not make fame or money by sin. If I see a wrong, I will first avoid it, and then tell of it that others may avoid it. If others do wrong, I will do right all the more. No ill-got gold shall be deposited to my credit. I will be successful and famous, if at all, by justice, righteousness, Christianity, manliness. I will live in the world the example of a man brave and clean and Christian. I will put the Devil down, and live great and good. I have an ideal from the New Testament, from God; it is a true ideal, therefore practical. I shall live it out, though it shame the Church and the State and the street likewise. It can be done. There are great examples in life of just this sort of greatness. Not to mention the heroes, is not this man whose name is so great in the Church and on the street too, and that man to whom the nation looks up, — are not both true and noble men?"

Such a one begins his life scorning the tricks of trade, content with little so it be cleanly won and really his. An older man of no Christian ideal, of a low and vulgar aim, says, "My neighbor, you are very young, but will grow wiser as you grow old. Your head is full of notions. You are a visionary man, not to be trusted at present. You are yet too raw to make proper distinctions. Don't you know, my lad, that you will never be taken up by the world if you do so? If one would succeed, he must take the world as it is, not as it is not. Give over that foolish whim of being better than others; I have done so. Look over my inventory and see the result. If you would get along with the world, you must not be afraid of soiling your hands. Besides, it is not over-modest in you, youngster as you are, to set up for a reformer; wait till you are sixty or seventy for that. All really valuable reforms come from old men. I have lived a good while; the world is well enough for me. And I have learned one maxim that is worth more than all your philosophy and ideals, worth more than your Christianity besides; that is, to 'let well enough alone,' — to make the world serve me without trying to mend it." The young man wonders and doubts, finds it difficult to apply his truths to practice. It demands an austere self-denial of him. He hates to be singular, and loves to succeed.

He comes more into contact with the world, and finds few that share his ideas, fewer still that practise them, few even that tolerate them. His minister tells him that society is not based on moral ideas, nor ever will be; that it is the part of philosophy and religion to teach us to bear the evils of the world, not to remove them, — that would be a revolution. I have myself heard such words uttered by the minister of a Christian church and with this application. Then he approaches the men he had considered as the models of men, — for he had heard them so commended. On close examination he finds often that they have become famous and successful only by compliance with the wickedness of the world; that they had either the average selfishness and more than the average skill, or the average skill and more than the average selfishness, and so succeeded. Like the Pharisees' cup, their reputations were clean without, but within filled with the results of robbery and injustice; their reputation brave, but their character base. So at a distance one looks at the city of Naples, and it seems a city of palaces and beautiful churches, — a dream of the sea copied into marble and placed on the land; but as you enter, you find mean streets and filthy lanes, and the most squalid beggary creeping in the mud. You search long for the things that astonished you with their beauty.

Seen close at hand, you admire them as at first; yes, with greater admiration, but wonder more that such things could rise out of such littleness and misery around. By such an experience our young man begins to think that he was mistaken; that his neighbor and the minister and the famous man are right; that if he wants to succeed he must not be very nice about the means; that it costs a good deal to keep a conscience void of offence; that it will not pay, — it costs more than it comes to; that righteousness, goodness, and piety are worth a good deal in the New Testament and probably in heaven, but of little worth anywhere else; that this one precept, "Take care of yourself, no matter how," is worth all the Sermons on the Mount, the Parables, and the Epistles, with his fine ideal into the bargain. "Who are you, young man," he says to himself, "to set up to reform the world? Who are you that refuse compliance with what the world thinks right? But one single little man, of no great ability and no renown, — when I compare myself with the world, I look contemptible. Besides, what is likely to come of all this? I shall be like Job's wicked man, and have no name in the street." So he mends his fortune by marring his soul. He sets then a low ideal, takes things as they are, learns and practises the tricks of his trade; counts that well enough which will serve his turn, and lets well

enough alone. He follows this method the more zealously that he may retrieve the time he lost before. He succeeds; his desire is granted, but baseness enters his soul. He dwindles in the qualities of a man, and becomes a union of the worldling and the hypocrite, a wolf that can bite and devour all the week and can howl and whine on Sunday. He hears no longer the trumpet from heaven, saying, "Come up hither;" or hearing it, says, "I am too old to be caught thus. Sound away; the young men will listen; the old know better."

Men do this, and turn away from their loftier notions, because they do not know the power of one man. We often overrate the force of majorities, and vastly underrate the weight of an idea, of a man that has a single truth which the majority has not. He that has a great religious or moral truth which others have not, is not only stronger than ten men who have it not, but stronger than all such men. Ten strong-bodied men may combine and kill a giant; if ten cannot, one hundred may; but in greatness of character all the mean men on earth cannot equal one man who is noble. They fear him, not he them. He shall really succeed before God, — not seem to succeed only before men. Let him be faithful to Truth, it will surely win its way, for Truth is the rule by which God governs the world, — the relations of things as they

are, not as they are not. We underrate the powers of a single man, if right. In all the world there is nothing so powerful as an idea, if it be true. Men may pass away, nations go under in the storm of States, cities perish like a dewdrop in the sand, great reputations dwindle at last into an empty name; but through the ages, amid all the wasting of mountains, the decay of nations, the vanishing of cities, the idea lives on, and will live forever while God rules the affairs of men. Nothing is so imperishable as that; let it once get spoken, it is sure to prevail. With that idea how powerful does the one man become!

It is curious to see in the history of the world how much has often been done by one single man who had a lofty aim. In the last three centuries a new element has been introduced into civilized life which is more powerful than the armies of Xerxes; which changes the relation of nation to nation, of man to man; and which has led mankind to devote many times the amount of its acquisition in science and literature to send comfort and happiness into millions of homes and to multiply the means of moral and religious influence a thousand-fold; a power which defeats armies and will at last forbid armies to be, — I mean the invention of printing. In this present century, too, another element has been introduced which it is hoped will do more

for us than the printing-press; which binds a country together as if it were a town; unites nations like the wards of a city; which does the drudgery of the world; adds to the wealth, the comfort, and the welfare of mankind to a degree which no one can calculate; and in connection with the other invention silently effects the greatest revolutions in social, national, and political affairs. I allude to the steam-engine.[1] Yet each of these was once but the idea of a single little man, who when he compared himself to the crowd that went through the streets of a city, seemed contemptible and not worthy to be thought of. Had the Prophet of Types and the Prophet of Steam been false to their mission, conformed with the world, the world's face had been quite other than now it is, you and I not what now we are. The welfare of millions may depend on one little man's doing his duty. But for the perseverance of one man, and that too for many years, in want and disgrace, reckoned visionary, a madman, almost a fool, how long would Europe have waited for the discovery of America? But for the faithfulness of Luther, how long should we have toiled under the Egyptian yoke and in the Egyptian darkness, which the Roman Catholic Church had brought on the world?

[1] Parker did not mention the telegraph. Morse's invention was introduced that year. — Ed.

But for a few men that might be named in not many words, where had been the temperance reform, where the movement at this day against slavery? We look at some great and wide-spread evil, which goes successfully on and conquers man after man and State after State, — the sin of trade, of society, the tyranny of the strong over the weak, — and think it is to be removed by great and extraordinary measures. We look for something wonderful, and say, "Oh, if I could work a miracle, how soon should this evil be at an end!" Perhaps not. He that is faithful in little would be faithful in all. He that begins in truth and righteousness, however humbly, will work a miracle at the last, whereat the nations shall pause and wonder. We often think it is by causes apparently great that the world is to be moved first, and next mended. Mankind was in a bad state at the commencement of the Roman Empire. All nations, faint from wars, surrendered, obedient to that haughty power whose armies trod the world under foot. Old philosophies were little heeded; old forms of religion had become contemptible to the wise, though all the more zealously defended by the priest, as some capricious woman loves best her baboon when he is soonest to die, neglecting for him her babe new-born. The strong everywhere trod down the weak; no great works of creative art

were carved new out of first thought, for the religious spirit seemed comparatively dead. Men never despair of the world; but, "Who shall save us?" was the question. Men looked to Augustus Cæsar. He was the Emperor of Rome. The legions of the world were at his command. From the Baltic Sea to the Mountains of the Moon; from the Solway Frith to the Persian Gulf,— all stooped beneath his conquering eagles. The riches of the world adorned his new palace on the Aventine Hill at Rome. Men called him divine, and asked him to save the world. The best thing he did is told in seven words,— finding Rome brick, he left it marble. But while he was thus at work, with his wealth, his legions, his divinity, and his world, there was playing with chips in a carpenter's shop in Nazareth a little Jewish boy of a thoughtful turn, who in a few years was to make the Cæsars ridiculous with their marble Rome, their legions, their wealth, their divinity, and their world. Silently, with one man, there begins a revolution that sweeps off like a deluge all traces of former devastation. The power of old religions fades; their statues break; their temples perish; their priests expire. Rome changes her laws and her gods, and the name of the Jewish boy is more potent by far than that of Jupiter. The legions have gone, the marble perished; the fox burrows in the palace of the

Cæsars; the owl at midnight makes solitariness more desolate on the spot where Augustus gathered the wealth, the wit, the wisdom of a world; but the spirit of that Jewish boy goes to all the green islands of the Western main, and freshens our heart to-day.

We often forget the power a single man has over the many. One man against the mass is a case that is often tried in the world and decided in favor of the one man. If Micaiah has the spirit of God, he prevails over the four hundred priests of Baal that have it not. Who has not seen in a great hall of this city the people assembled to hear some great statesman? Before he comes, they stand there idle, impotent, looking foolish enough, as a body with no head, — clamorous, noisy, a forlorn-looking mass of men, like a sail in a calm day, flapping this way and that. But the man comes, — the man they waited for. He speaks, and all is still. Men wave in his words as the group of trees to the wind that passes by. His words press into their hearts; their thoughts are changed, and the great man looks down into that silent but speaking upturned sea of faces, and sees therein but his own image repeated in five thousand men. So have I seen upon the shore of some Atlantic bay a boat left dry by the retreating tide. Useless and ridiculous it seemed, a boat on the dry land. But in

due time the waters came; and held by its tether, the boat drifted here and there, with the swashing of the flood, till some man came down on the beach, stepped upon the bark, clapped up the mast, spread out the sail, put down the helm, cast off the tie; and then as if a soul were in the boat, the wind swept her smoothly on. So it always is with the world and the world's men; they are waiting, like Simeon, for their consolation.

But perhaps you will say, "I am a humble man of little powers; I can affect only myself." This is not so certain. Example is more moving than words, and this apparent paradox takes place, that this strongest force may be lodged in the humblest hands. He that moves himself aright has begun to move the world. "Give me whereon to stand," said Archimedes, "and I will move the world." Take it where you stand, and begin now. If a man have an high aim and live true to that, he will soon find his example produce an effect that he little dreamed of at first. Sometimes you see a woman of lofty aims applying her ideal to life, not with much talk at the corners of the street, but with humble perseverance, in the intellectual, moral, and religious education of her family. You see the effect then on herself, her husband, her children. Other women envy, but imitate. Soon her example has gone round the village. By and

by her child has become a man, and men wonder whence has he this wisdom, this moral power, this soul of faith, that sustains him in trial. It was the soul of that mother, over whose grave the bee gathers honey in June, — it was the soul of that mother of lofty ideal that sustained him and made him a man. Few of us know the power of one man, however humble, if only right and true. How many a good man can trace back his goodness to a germ of piety awakened in his soul by some chance example, some word spoken by the wayside of his youth! We distrust the power of an idea, the power of truth, the power of one high soul.

Then too we forget God in our over-regard for men. We become cowards, and with the name Christian have nothing but that name. We forget that it is better to be certain that you are right before the eyes of the all-judging God than it is to have the majority to keep in countenance your littleness of faith and nothingness of works. He that listens to this trumpet voice which says, "Come up hither," and, mindful of its high command, fares on, shall not lack encouragement nor fail of his reward. A good work is its own recompense. A noble heart, a noble life, unstained and beautiful, are rewards that make wealth and fame ridiculous. These await you here. Set your aim to be a man and to live such in the world; to make

your Christianity tell in your life, in bearing the crosses and doing the duties of life. You shall silently commence thereby a revolution in men's affairs that will go on with progressive force, and never end. Hope much of yourself, and you will achieve much. In your life remember your prayers, and in the heat of the world think on the dreams of your youth. Who knows what good shall be done by your fidelity? This you know, that it is all God demands of you. Try this, not fearing man, but loving God, and in your own heart shall that trumpet speak with no uncertain sound, cheering you on; and at last shall a glad voice speak, "Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many. Come up hither. Thou art my beloved son, and in thee am I well pleased."

When Abraham, son of Terah, was a young man, he dwelt in Haran with his father, and with Nahor and Haran and their kindred. But Terah and his family worshipped an idol, a stock and a stone, offering sacrifices to it in a cave, and calling it God, the Lord; for so their fathers had done. But the young heart of Abraham swelled within him when he saw it, and he said, "Nay, Father, an idol is nothing; though thousands pray to it, it cannot help them." But Terah said, "The idol is a god, and thou art a fool, my son, a fool and a blasphemer, to deny it. Worship as thy fathers have

done, or the gods will curse thee." Abraham bowed his head, but went his own way, worshipping the true God. Then the people said, "Who is this youth that is wiser than his fathers, and would teach us the way of the Lord, and be holier in God's sight than we?" And they called him Abram in derision; "for," they said, "he would be the great father," and stoned him with stones, yet sparing his life. And Abraham, sorely wounded, said in his heart, "Is it not better to be mad among my brothers than to live whole and sound-minded alone and against them?" And he answered and said, "Nay, that is the counsel of a fool and a blasphemer;" for the trumpet of the Lord sounded in his ears, and said, "Come up hither." So Abraham was true to his faith, and bowed not to the idols, but served mankind and the God of truth. Yea, he broke the idols in pieces; and when his father sought his life, Abraham fled out of the land. But the duty was hard; and he fell on his face, calling upon God in his extremity; and the voice of God spoke in his heart, saying, "Fear not, Abraham, for I am with thee. Walk before me and be perfect. Get thee out of thy country and thy father's house, and I will show thee a land to dwell in. Though thou passest over this river with only thy staff and thy scrip, hunted and forsaken, behold, I will make of thee a great nation, and in thee shall

the people be blessed. Thou shalt be called Abraham, for thou shalt be the father of a multitude." And Abraham arose and went on. He served the Lord God of heaven and earth who speaks in the heart. His word passed into the people ; they said, " Let us serve also the God of Abraham, for he is a righteous man and full of faith." He became the father of many nations, and his blessing rests now upon the earth.

1845.

XIV.

GOD'S INCOME TO MAN.

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. — 1 John iv. 12.

ALL finite things have their ultimate ground in God. He is their life, their being, the source of all this river of beauty, this lake of life, this ocean of existence. Without him nothing could be. They are the effect, he the cause, — they transient and derivative, he ever the same and absolute. Follow back any of their branches here on earth, there in heaven, and you trace it at last to him as the parent trunk and centre of these woods of matter. The heavens are rooted in the soul of infinity. They change, and may fade and pass away as your breath dries up from a mirror where it was first congealed; he is the same from everlasting to everlasting. Yet as there is a progress in Nature itself, shown by the rude things coming first, and later the more refined; as there is a progress in man, — so is there likewise a progress in man's notion or conception of the All-Father.

Nature, like man, is a perpetual becoming. He is the everlasting Being, the Being absolute, perfect, infinite. As such, he fills the world of space; its ground and cause are not in itself, but in him. We know in part the properties of matter, its history and its prophecy; but it is not self-originated, not self-directed, not self-sustained. Its origin, direction, preservation, we refer back to the infinite power, wisdom, love. Not that he is in one place or there at one time; but, diffused in all space and through all time, he is immensity and eternity itself. Each finite atom, — the stone which the paver drove down in the streets yesterday, the white chrysanthemum which blooms in your window, the yellow flower which flaunts away its life beside a wild brook to-day, — if you follow it out, leads you back by successive steps of inference to the eternal cause. Philosophy, science, logic itself, show this, referring the finite back to the Infinite. To the scientific soul, God is behind every tree in the wood, underneath each brown leaf. He creates, and he sustains; for preservation is but a continual creation. Great and little things, leaves, atoms of dust, trees, continents, planets, systems, the universe of worlds, seem but a Jacob's ladder leading from us to him. This is fact, not poetry; not religion alone, but science as well. Once the theologians thought it debasing the Deity to think of him

as present in the little things, and therefore taught that he dwelt aside from the world; heaven was his court, but heaven was high. He stood far from his world, overruling it by delegates, not by himself; so they taught that he seldom mingled in the world's affairs, was transiently present, and then by miracle alone. This is the thought of the Old Testament in its commoner parts. Now science tells us that he is everywhere, and at all times; that he is essentially present in each point of space, present by law and not by miracle; is immanent, indwelling there, — the same power, wisdom, love, which first created, sustaining still and guiding on his growing work. That theology saw God but seldom, and then afar off; this philosophy finds him here and now, ever present, ever active, blessed and blessing. The more law was extended, the more the old theology found its notions of Deity excluded from the world, for his presence was miracle, not law. Now, the more we extend the boundaries of law, the more certainly do we see the footprints of our Father, and feel more warmly too his presence at our heart. Science beholds him not only when the thunder fills the sky, but in the ascending vapor, in the falling dew, in the bruiting wind and the all-invigorating sun, or the refreshing darkness of the night. Moses saw him triumphantly present in the bush that burned and was

not consumed. Science reveals him there when that bush is white with April flowers, or green with summer leaves, or varied 'neath the touches of the autumnal frost, or draped with winter's ice. Science shows us by fact the same power forever dwelling there. All ground therefore is holy ground; every bush burns with God; every point of space is filled up with Deity, in which he is present each moment of time. This is unavoidably so; for the world of material things is not self-conscious, not free, — and therefore in all these things there is no disturbing will, no current adverse to the tranquil tide of the divine life. The sun cannot choose but light the world and hold each wandering planet by attraction's golden leash. So no power is lost; there is no conflict. Thus it is with all things. The frost must come in its season, doing its work without delay; the wind must blow; the lightning must with scorching fire and thunders speak. The acorn, feeling in her dim, unconscious breast the germ of future life, when the genial moisture and warmth of spring return, must open her bosom to put forth the aspiring shoot, and that must grow. All these things are perforce filled with the divine. They are ruled by law; they obey, not that they will, but that they must. You come higher up among animals, and you find the beginnings of consciousness, — yes, of self-consciousness, and so of freedom of

will. This you find in the higher animals, — the dog, the elephant. By virtue of this we infuse our character into them and teach them. Still, the whole world of animals in the natural state seems wholly subject to instinct; to be ruled by law, much as the frost and sun, and with as little freedom. They therefore are not artists whose works record their own character and personal thoughts, but only tools with which the Father of us all carves out his thought. The slight degree of freedom they possess is not enough to allow of any disturbance in the force of Nature. The bee builds her fortress, — a copy, not of her own thought, but of that of the Author of all things; so it is with the spider's web, with all the works of animals. All their works are revelations, not of themselves, but of the divine thought. In that quarter nothing is lost, there is no adverse will. They grow no wiser by experiment;[1] there is no sin, not even its possibility.

We come to man. He is no more self-originated than they, nor self-sustained. His cause lies out of himself, not in himself. Man is not merely a body, but a soul none the less; but that soul, like

[1] Parker had not then learned of the flood of light which later researches in natural history throw on the development of animals, showing that they do grow wiser by experiment, and that their intelligence is capable of development. — Ed.

the envelope, is not its own cause. Man also is an effect; God the cause. He is the ground of our being; without him ever present, to preserve as to create, we could not be, — nor body, nor soul. As he fills each point of space, so he fills each point of spirit. The power we have, therefore, is not ours, but of him. But man, self-conscious man, is free, can choose, can obey his being's law or not obey. I do not mean that man has absolute freedom of will, but relative; entire freedom belongs, it seems to me, to God alone. Man has partial freedom, — freedom to use well or ill the power bestowed. He is conscious, — conscious of God and his high laws. Still, I think that there are limits to this freedom. No man has freedom wholly to mar and destroy his soul; man can increase his freedom or contract it. The old theological notion was that God was transiently present in man at his birth or his death, or in some high hour of visitation when he rose in rapture far above his common thought; that God was present in man by miracle, and not by law, — occasionally present, then withdrawn. But it seems to me that he is not only ever present in each atom of space, but also ever present in the soul of man, both when we act in higher and lower things. For the Infinite must be everywhere, and where he is, be active. His, therefore, is all our strength, whether we obey

or disobey. Yet there are times when we fully obey and keep his laws, when our will has become one with his. Our little atom moves in the plane of his infinite motion; the dot is swimming with the tide of God. Then it may be truly said that he dwells with us, lives in us, acts by us, thinks through us, and wills by our means. There is then in us no adverse will, so no conflict, and therefore no loss. The true man, as pure as true, is the going forth of the Infinite, an incarnation of his Father, as much as the sun, — yea, far more, an incarnation in a higher mood, self-conscious, free. If the heavens declare Thy glory, how much more a heroic soul, a brave good man! Take the human race as a whole, its history as a whole, estimate it all as the life of one man, and you must confess that mankind is inspired, — though not wholly so, not entirely informed and acted on by the Divine Spirit.

Yet you must confess that God acts on man's unconsciousness; that he is in history marshalling mankind on from age to age, and even out of their folly, caprice, passion, and sin, advancing the interests of the whole race. Could we obtain a point high enough and a view wide and commanding, I doubt not that we should see that this wisdom which has guided the events of history was as perfect as that which whirls the comets through the

sky; that the whole loss of mankind in its history — spite of all its wars and misgovernments, the selfishness of the strong, the cowardice of the little — amounted to no more than the oscillations of a planet to its onward sweep; no more than the swinging of a child from side to side as he walks in the street, now and then stumbling, but rising and going forth once more. There is an involuntary residence of God in man, as such; in you and me. This may be called the minimum of Deity in man, the smallest degree of divine presence, of heavenly indwelling. I know that is sometimes denied; but I think that no one can wholly divest himself of it. Surely not; that would sink him lower in being than the stone or sod, — into blank non-existence. So long as we live, that life is the all-sustaining power of Heaven present with us. Religious consciousness, religious sentiment, the affections, are the windows of the soul which look toward heaven. No man can wholly bar them up. So long as he lives, some little light shines through to warm the man. But as we are free and conscious, it lies within our power to enlarge this degree of divinity within us, to become partakers of him more and more; or we may diminish this degree of divinity, become less and less, for a time. The dot may strive to swim against the tide, or cross its line

on any angle, great or small; and then the power God lends us is acting against itself, against him who lent. Yet how small that action compared with God! We are all capable of this communion with him, yet not all in an equal degree here and now; some are by the nature born with them capable of a greater measure of receipt from him, others with less. Yet I do not think the great difference we see in men at this day depends so much upon the primal gift as on the use men make of it. All men are born with holy gifts, few with holy genius. There are many that shut themselves out from that divine light, and live only by pale, reflected fires, whom Heaven has gifted with many talents. Some dim the dawnings of Heaven at all their four entrances by a life of lowness and sensuality. They place their enjoyment in their appetites, and these will never feed the man. These cases are rare. Others by selfishness, by an exclusive counselling with prudence or worldly thrift, by a sluggish refusal even to look up to the great Source of righteousness and truth and good, turn away from their proper actions and lose the power of right,—men of low aims, content with one good action in their life, content with seeming good, content with appearances, not seeking perfection; men that sell themselves to things as they are, instead of giving

themselves away to truth and righteousness, to goodness and to God. The world is full of such men, — men who cease to grow, who are content to be little, who despair of heroism in themselves, and mock at brave endeavors in all other men, calling that madness or fanaticism. Men that are mired in worldliness are subdued to what they wallow in. Others you see who perennially take more and more of the divine into their life and soul; they become more and more inspired. At first these periods of inspiration are but moments, and those rare. These persons are transiently divine, — occasional Christians; but they walk in the light that falls on them, and journey forth to clearer light and far more plenteous. They look for truth, and welcome what thereof they see. Each particle received greatens their love and their receptive power. They ask for righteousness; and when it comes, by its light they see a thousand wrongs, which never seemed wrongs before. By each action conscience gets a clearer sight, and they live moral truth the more; the more it is seen, the more it is lived. They learn to live with kind affections, bearing this world's ill, and striving to conquer it with good. Each step taken here prepares them for a better and a higher step, and so they grow. For the grass there is the nightly dew, the daily sun, the constant air,

the solid, all-supporting ground; and sustained, enlightened, watered, and fed thereby, the little plant receives accessions of new strength, new loveliness, — grows and fills up the measure of its life. So the true man, faithful to his little, receives continual influx from on high; supported by the ground of God, refreshed by his air, warmed by his sun, and watered by continual dews of grace divine, he grows, forever becoming more and more. How many men have we all seen of this sort! — men of no great powers at first, easily distanced by abler men, men better born; but men of most unshaken truth. They seemed to have little will; they were so balanced in favor of righteousness and truth, they seemed to need no will. How they grew, — grew in righteousness, religion, conscience, mind, and heart, till they far surpassed men who had at first towered over their heads like giants, and looked down contemptuous!

I have seen a man with large powers, exceeding great, but proud, rebellious, violent, and self-willed, — a snaky-minded man, forever in a coil, or moving with a wriggling gait from thought to thought. When he looked up, reverently asking for Truth, she came. He was not content with Truth; it must be Truth and *I*. He asked of Truth, he asked of Righteousness and Love, "How high will you place *me?* What power give *me* over my fellows?

What name among men?" Truth, who buys not nor sells, laid her fingers on her lips, and silently withdrew. Then the man stood there alone; no, not stood, and not alone, — he drifted, floated on, ever tossed in a sea of troubles; seeking companionship of multitudes, and yet nowhere at home, now and then tearfully looking back to the hour when truth and righteousness assured him of God's incoming upon the pure and holy soul. Long, long those angels hover over his head, and cry, "Return, return!" But self-will says, "I 'll not return!" and so the man grows less and less, and like that ancient worm crawls with prone face and feeds upon the dust, counting it life to shed a poison glitter in the sun, and with discordant thrust to hiss at the passers-by, or lurking in the grass, with calumnious tooth to bite at a good man's heel. He has not the income of Heaven, — feeding, watering, lighting, and life-giving to his soul. It is the income of lowness and meanness which he asks and takes, — cunning, not wisdom. Poor man! God would baptize his soul with spirit and with fire, — he will not. So the world baptizes his body with its mud and slime, and the poor deceived one says, "Aha! I am famous, great, and clean; stand back, ye saints, for I am holier than thou." I have seen others too, starting with little gifts, content with daily duties, — not seeking

fame nor mightiness; asking only their own deserts of men; asking of Heaven truth, righteousness, and love, goodness and piety; when they received a little, they made it more. Their light was doubly brilliant, when they made it life. They seemed to have small stock of wisdom, small force or power; but like the fabled widow whom Elias blessed, their little stock of oil and flour held out continually; and while great men failed of want and perished, they had enough and to spare. So have I seen a gardener using the simple light of day which fell on rocks and wood and field, and out of that light painting his garden with roses, lilies, violets, — flowers of every hue, — until men wondered how all that beauty could come of simple sunbeams, and as they wondered found a fragrance there even yet more marvellous. Yet so it was: the sun no brighter shone upon the gardener's field than on the rocks, the lichens, and the highway dust; but in the gardener found a sunny mind, and so brought beauty forth. How often do you see a woman — for she is commonly perhaps more true to Heaven than ambitious and intriguing man — with no great gifts, perhaps, yet certain as an oracle in all that relates to righteousness and truth! She does little reasoning; having much reason, she is sunlight itself. In difficult matters, the path of duty is plain as the high-

way, and men forget their reasoning, and ask of her, "Where lies the way?" It is not her own strength she works by, but the supernatural strength of Heaven. She will outsee the craftiest man, and outwit the subtlest; for she looks only for the truth. How much of the divine will dwells with her! Such an one is inspired; if always true, why, permanently inspired, — not always rising to that lofty state in which we see new truth, but always dwelling on that table-land, that clear mountain height, in which duty appears as it is, and truth old and familiar dwells with us. In such an one there is no conflict between desire and duty, between what we know is right and what we mean to do. So in her action there is no loss, — no oscillation even, — but motion beautiful, and that right onward too. She has outgrown the stumbling gait of infancy, the devious course of wanton childhood, and faces straight on. Such an one is at one with God, and has no need to go to heaven, is in heaven now; yet becoming daily more and greater, with such there is a perpetual accession of the Deity. No strength goes out to gain the victory; for all is income of its own accord.[1]

[1] This is from Thoreau's "Sympathy" in "The Dial," July, 1840, vol. i. p. 71.

> "No strength went out to gain him victory,
> Where all was income of its own accord."

It seems to me that we have, so to say, channels of communication with our Father in heaven. First, we use faithfully our reason, and we get at truth; the more faithfully we try, the more we get; and getting more, we love the more, and so enlarge the mind. If we think truth, so far God dwelleth in us. Second, we use faithfully conscience and see the eternally right, justice, moral truth; we are not dazzled looking on that light; we look and are healed of a blindness, healed by the fiery serpent from within us, not that which stung us long ago. The more we see, the more we love, and live the more. He that decides for moral truth, God dwelleth also in him, and he in God. Third, we use faithfully the affections, and we gain love. Selfishness, violence, all the armor of defence that foolish men gird themselves withal, fall from us, and with the power of love we feel that we can overcome the world. It transfigures us, till we shine in spirit; and common life, the daily household cares, and the familiar face of man and woman seem beautiful as in an angel's home. Fourth, we use faithfully the religious sentiment, and gain religion, goodness, and peace, that confiding trust in the Eternal One which men call faith. Doubt and fear have gone, all partial malice, treachery, and dread. Daily duty is enough for us, and daily sorrows, as once they were, we have turned to daily joys.

The Balaams, men sent to crush us by their words, come up with blessings on their lips, and, marvelling, return. It was an angel who stayed the beast we rode, and turned us back to better things. We have the fourfold income of the divine upon us. It comes as truth, as righteousness, as love, as faith. If we think truly, God dwells in us, if we dwell aright, if we truly love and fully trust. So the scale of perfections is complete; truth is no longer cold, nor righteousness unlovely, nor love partial, nor faith foolish; but each borrows continually from all the others, and so they pass from emptiness to perfection, and the man becomes greater and more from year to year. He loses nothing; there is in him no conflict. God's law acts through him as through the rocks and trees; they are one with God, not lost; this is to be consciously at one with him. The man has not lost the human, only put on the divine; in all human relations he is more than ever the father, brother, husband, friend. Like Moses coming from the mountain, he knows not, cares not, how his face shall shine, but speaks his oracle and does his work. In this fourfold way, the Spirit descends on him; the divine image is renewed in him. He feels his kinship to the Infinite; Christ is born within his breast; and he transforms himself into the same image that lies mirrored in the clear

spirit's deepest depths, — the image in which he created man transfigured thus. Good and evil come, as Moses and Elias, to bear him witness and to wait on him, while far below, the world is lost in sleep, and cannot watch one hour. Thus he grows continually, not asking how; rooted in the celestial soil, he grows toward heaven; religion, conscience, heart, and soul become daily greater, and he gets nearer to man and to his God. How little seem the sorrows of this world, the loss of friends, however dear! "Our Father took them home," we say. "His will is mine; let his will have its way." How little seems the world's applause, and how poor its honors are! Will such an one lie, deceive, and cheat for gold and honor; will he stoop his high aims and be mean and vulgar, seeking for applause, and still the voice of Heaven on his quivering lip, fearing to be wise above the crowd? Will he silence the chanting of God's angel choirs within his heart, and listen to the wretched quacking of the public geese? It cannot be. Will such an one be less fit for the common duties of life, for its rudest and its hardest works? Could Christ be less the carpenter, or less the fisherman, because the Saviour too, the perfect man, and one with God? Nay, while others have toiled the whole night and yet caught nothing, he shall fill his bursting nets.

How far we live from him; how near we may be! What if each one of us sought to become a partaker of the divinity, to have this truth, this righteousness, this love, and to be full of trust in him? What if you and I, each of us, thought as much of this as some are thinking just now of the election of a few weak men to a conspicuous place? What if we set our feet forward toward that? How great should we soon become; how happy our daily life! How would all things help us! How contented we should be with the right; how patiently, anxiously, should we strive after it; how successfully achieve it! What a home would yours be, my brother, if you sought that, bravely tried to be inspired of God! How you would rise above the spires of the churches, and having drank that heavenly spring, come here no more to quaff at my poor shallow stream! Why give away the heavenly Spirit, which would fill these temple-hearts of ours with perfect beauty and continual hymns? Why not gather the wandering sunbeams of life into lilies, roses, violets, fragrant flowers of manliness? Alas! we know not yet the meaning of a man; we take mean counsel of the flesh, and put up with little men. God walks in the garden, ready to bless his new-born child. Eve opens her bosom to the whispering snake whose venomous speech has poisoned her ear; she devours her apple; Eden has gone, and gone the

tree of life. She walks on ground that is cursed, amid thorns and thistles; behind her waves the fiery sword of public shame; saddened Adam follows, both cast out.

Why do we follow mean and little men? There stands the world's hero,— manlier than men, and therefore so divine. Into his soul was the perpetual income of God, as truth, as righteousness, as love, and all-absorbing faith. The same truth and righteousness and love and all-absorbing faith wait there for you, — yea, more, for manhood is not yet complete, and man is a perpetual becoming, dawning into a perfect day, and Christ but a prophecy of more. All the Deity of the Godhead watches over you; on the walls of your heart will he write his eternal thought continually, as truth, righteousness, love, and faith come in and dwell. Yea, come, O Father, come and dwell with us, that we dwindle not, but rooted in thee, watered and fed and lighted too by thee, may grow forever in thy sight, becoming more and more!

1846

XV.

THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION.

The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. — Job xxxii. 8.

THERE is a general belief in the human race that men have communication with God and receive inspiration from him. This belief appears to be spontaneous, and seems to belong to the whole race. You find it in the earliest ages and the latest; in mythology, history, philosophy. It lies at the foundation of prayer; for if I cannot penetrate to the actual presence of God and receive something from him, then prayer is of no avail, but is an operation purely subjective, limited to my own personality.

It is intimately connected with the notion of Providence. For if God directs the course of affairs of men, nations, or the world, — if he mingles his thought with the mind of man, his justice with the conscience of men, his beauty with their taste, his love with their affection, his fulness with their soul, — it must be chiefly by means of inspiration.

The notions of prophecy, oracles, divination, common in most countries even now, all refer back to this for their origin. The subject is one much talked of, one of great importance, but one on which much confusion of thought prevails.

According to the common doctrine which is taught in the popular theology of our churches, inspiration is a rare thing, extraordinary and miraculous. Man is passive in the reception of it and in the manifestation thereof, — only a pipe on which the Spirit of God makes music. He can do nothing to merit or receive it; it depends purely on God, and so the communication of inspiration seems purely an act of beneficence on his part. He might give it as well to Judas as to Jesus, at one time as another time, in sleep or in waking, in play or study, or in hunger. The common notion is that inspiration is the direct and miraculous communication of knowledge to a man by God. The matter communicated is called a revelation, and is supposed to be quite distinct from information acquired in any other way. Inspiration is a miracle; all laws of matter and of mind are set aside; it is occasional; the inspired man is not always in the state of inspiration. It is rare, limited to a very few persons in the whole mass. It is perfect; that is, the knowledge given, the revelation, is of pure truth, — so that the in-

spired man speaks the truth, and nothing but the truth, on all matters. Nothing true can be added to it. The test of inspiration is not the truth of the thing revealed, — for that would imply that man uninspired was the judge of inspiration, — but some miracle wrought by an inspired man as the seal of his mission. It is granted to man only in matters pertaining to religion and theology, — not at all in matters of science, history, and politics, except so far as religion is concerned. Inspiration is thought to be limited to the Jews and Christians, but it is a rare gift even to them; for among the Jews, only Moses, Joshua, and the prophets had it, with the writers of the Old Testament, — perhaps fifty or a hundred in all; and among the Christians, only Christ, the Apostles and writers of the New Testament, with the early preachers, — making some fifty or sixty, perhaps. That is the Protestant notion of inspiration, that it is limited to about one hundred or two hundred souls in the whole world. They suppose, too, that it is now ended; that the New Testament is not only the word of God, but his last word; and "the faith once delivered to the saints" means the faith once for all, and God has no more to say. Accordingly, inspiration has ceased and will not return; there has been no inspiration for eighteen hundred years. In this view, it is thought right and

Christian to speak of the Bible as an inspired book, a revelation; of the religious doctrines thereof as revealed religion; to speak of religion as resting on the authority of men, — of Paul and Peter and the rest, as inspired men; that in the Bible there is not the smallest error, neither of doctrine nor in men; that Christianity is to be taught on the authority of inspired men, — infallible men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and wrought miracles as proof of their divine commission. A lecture is delivered once in three years at Cambridge to defend this view.

All this, it seems to me, is erroneous and full of danger. It has for its foundation a false theology, which also rests on a false philosophy, a false view of man, his nature, capacity, and destination; a false view of God, his character and design, and of the relation between man and God. Let us see if we cannot arrive at notions a little more philosophical and comforting than the popular.

For convenience' sake, we may divide the universe of actual things into three parts, — God, man, and the material world. Let us see what relation the three bear to one another. God — the being of perfect power, perfect wisdom, perfect love — is of course the Cause and Giver of all things, material or spiritual, — the ultimate of all

other power. All the powers of matter and of mind of course are originally derived from him, and continually supplied. That is the general relation of God to man and Nature.

Now, what in special is the relation of the material world to God? God is its cause, as creator; he created matter out of himself. But does his work stop there? Surely not. Nature can no more continue to be without God than it could begin to be. It exists only by his will, his act; he must have been present in every part of Nature to create it at first; and to sustain it, as much as at first to create it. He is universally present in Nature in every part of space. A grain of dust cannot exist without the power of God there in that grain of dust. Look at this a little more; take your point of departure from that particle of sand. It is a finite thing, — not self-created, not self-controlled, nor self-sustained. It must rest on the Infinite as its Author, Controller, Preserver. So you are led from the finite to the Infinite. Begin at the other end of the scale, — with God. The Infinite Being must be infinitely present — present with all his power, wisdom, love — in each spot; so that when you begin with the Infinite and follow that, you find the Infinite extending to all finite things, and therefore in this grain of sand. God, therefore, is in all matter. The Strength of

all is strong; the Loveliness of all is beautiful; the Motion of all is moving; the Being of all exists. You come to the conclusion that God inspires the material world with existence, force, order, beauty, peace; all its capacity is filled with that divine spirit. In the world of mineral and vegetable substances, there is no finite will; all the action there is the will of God. The lines marked out by the planets circling round the sun are ellipses drawn by God. The shapes of the crystals or the rocks, or of the flowers of the field, represent directly his thought. He is resident in the lily of the valley, in the diamond on a ring, in the far star which away off the other side of the world sends its cold sparkle down to us, in the star Antares, visible in Scorpio now-a-nights, which so remarkably changes its size. God, then, is present in Nature with all his attributes, — not transiently there to create, but permanently to preserve. Here he is immanent. But he transcends all this. The forms of action here are not indispensable. In another world the perfect form of vegetables may be angular and rectilinear, as here circular; and the minerals may be circular, as here angular. Nature depends on him, not he on it. God is Nature's centre and Nature's force; but God is his own centre and his own limit. This is an important distinction.

Now, look at the relation of man to Nature. Nature is the sphere of the body; we depend on that for all the means of life. Cut off the supplies, the body dies. The body has certain wants which Nature continually supplies. We have internal instincts, external limbs as their tools; and these two mediate between the want within and the supply without, — satisfy the demand. When these conditions of the body are fulfilled, then we have health, strength, beauty. The conditions are not perfectly fulfilled; and so the physical condition of the body is what we see, — sick men, weak men, ugly men. I think all this is plain. First, that Nature depends on God, and he is present there continually and with all of himself; second, that man's body depends directly on Nature, and receives supplies therefrom.

Now, look at the relation of man to God, viewing man also as a spirit; that is, as mind, conscience, affection, soul. Take the nature of a man as the point of departure. My soul is not self-created, not self-controlled in whole, though surely in part, not self-sustained. It is finite, yet reaching after the Infinite; no finite thing will content it. Show me what is beautiful; I want something yet more lovely. Give me wisdom, — all I can ask to-day; to-morrow it is like the multiplication-table and A B C. Make me to-morrow as religious as I pray to be to-day,

and next day I shall ask forgiveness of God for what now seem my virtues. No finite attainment contents me; I must have the actual infinity of God, and that alone sufficeth me. The more I grow in mind, conscience, affections, and soul, the more I am conscious of this dependence. The thinking is mine, but the thought is not my own. I cannot make a truth. I cannot make a truth false, nor a falsehood truth. The right which conscience points to, is not of me, but before me, beforetime of God. Have I invented justice, right, love, faith? No more than my eye invented light and my body sleep. Whence come the ideas of eternity, truth, right, love of God? From myself? Not at all. I am finite; they infinite. From men? They also are finite. Nay, from God himself. Just as the air, water, food, that sustain my flesh, come from all surrounding Nature, and that from God, so the ideal sentiment which sustains my soul comes from the all-surrounding God. Take the Infinite as a point of departure. God is perfect power, wisdom, love. The Infinite must be everywhere in each part of spirit as of space; in each soul present with all his power, wisdom, love. The manifestation of these must be proportionate to the degree and mode of being of the particular soul in which he dwells. Starting, therefore, from the finite or the Infinite, you come equally to the conclusion that the soul of

man is an abiding-place of God; that we are more or less partakers of his divinity and active subjects of his inspiration. All knowledge therefore is inspiration; all information is revelation. Such is the conclusion of philosophy.

Lay philosophy aside awhile, — the inductive method, starting from the finite particulars; the deductive method, starting from an intuition. Take simple spiritual sensation, and pious souls will tell you that they feel the presence of their God, — feel that the truth they welcome is not of them, but of God; that it is he who irradiates their minds and hearts. Nay, they will often go farther, and, overshadowed by the power of the Infinite, will deny that they have any agency of their own; it is all God's work. That testimony may not be very valuable when taken alone, but it shows which way the spiritual current sets. I should distrust any philosophy which seemed to contradict natural instincts. It is plain that God must be everywhere in space, else there is a part of space where there is no God. He must also be everywhere present in spirit, else there must be a part of spirit where there is no God. Where he is, he must be active, — active in some mode suited to the powers of the individual soul. All this follows from the ideal of God as the Infinite. Gravitation cannot act where it does not exist, nor be where it does

not act; for its existence is its activity. So is it with God.

Now, look a moment at the condition and laws of inspiration. There is a certain inspiration that is involuntary. This we have as animals, beings, as mere existences. This we cannot rid ourselves of if we would. Man must be active. Where there is no action, there is no possibility of inspiration. God will not inspire us as stones. But as activity of the body properly directed brings us into harmonious relations with the material world, so activity of soul properly directed brings us equally into harmonious relations with the spiritual world, with God. As the body has wants, instincts, limits, so the soul has wants, instincts, powers. As a proper use of the body, obtaining from Nature more material things, gives health, strength, and beauty, so a proper use of the soul gives us wisdom, goodness, piety, the beauty of holiness, by the acquisition of spiritual things from God. All this seems very plain. As I open my eye and receive light from an outward source; as I exercise the eye, and learn to see by its light, — so when I open my mind, I discover truth from a source which is not myself. As I use my mind, I learn to walk by that truth and be blessed and bless others, helping them to find more truth. The reception of this spiritual good is inspiration. But you see it is

orderly, regular, never a miracle. Now, the plant and the rock have no power to violate the laws of their natures, — no power, therefore, to oppose the laws of God. Therefore they are always perfect after their kind, and so receive from God all that they can hold. The measure of their inspiration is full. But I have this power; I may use well or abuse the gifts I possess, so I may increase or diminish my inspiration. I have power to abuse my senses or my soul.

Let me take one form of inspiration, the intellectual. When I receive truth, I receive the thought of God; when I receive this from another, I receive the thought of God indirectly and am indirectly inspired, — inspired through the medium of another mind. When I discover the truth myself, then I receive it straightway from God, then I am inspired directly, immediately. I may have been helped to it by the visible things in which I study anatomy, astronomy, botany; or without these visible things I may have learned it, as I study the universal laws of mind and matter. But then the difference is only in form; it is the mind of God that I have. So I might take another form of inspiration, — the affectional, love. Inspiration you will see, then, is not confined to matters of religion; it is coextensive with human concerns. It was a wise notion which prompted the old Hebrew writer

to say that God inspired Bezaleel and Aholiab to do their handiwork, not less than Moses to make laws. The mind is capable of intellectual inspiration, the conscience of moral, the heart of affectional; and a man is inspired just so far as he has the character of God in him, and just so far as he thinks truth, decides for justice and right, and feels love. To have love is to have God in the affections; as to have justice is to have God in the conscience. Now, this inspiration on a man's part may be constant or occasional, as a man transiently or permanently keeps the law of his soul. You have seen men who caught glimpses of truth and no more. You might say they were occasionally inspired. Other men, who always seem pervaded by wisdom, goodness, religion, sentiment, you might call permanently inspired. In either case you perceive the change is not on God's part, but on man's. God is constant. So then there can be but one kind of inspiration, as there is only one kind of truth, of thought; and but one mode of inspiration, the direct communication with God. On God's part it would seem there could be but one form thereof; that is, the imparting of himself, which is a creation in whole or in part, either through other minds or not. But there may be many forms in which it manifests itself, — in the saint, poet, philosopher, statesman, artist, and the like. You may

conceive of it as showing itself in four principal forms, — as it affects the mind or the affections, the conscience or the religious powers. There can be but one test of inspiration, and that is truth, — truth to the mind, conscience, affections, or religious sentiments. Thus the inspired mind must see truth, and just so far as it is inspired; the inspired affection must love, the inspired conscience decide justly, the inspired soul trust God. An outward miracle, if it were possible, would no more prove that its worker was inspired with truth or justice, love or faith, than an outward miracle would prove a gunner would always hit his mark. The hitting of the mark is proof of his power. If a man reveals to me a new truth, a higher sentiment, a completer justice, a purer sense of religion, I ask no outward sign of the excellence he offers me; the excellence is more than the sign or form. I know some men say, You must believe the truths of Christianity before you can be a Christian; but you must not believe them because they are truths, but because the Church says so, say the Roman Catholics; or because miracles were wrought to attest them, say the Unitarians.[1] I am amazed at this.

Now, there will be different degrees of inspiration. Perfect inspiration would be the reception

[1] This is hardly true of Unitarians now, though it was true when Parker wrote. — Ed.

of the whole of the Godhead, would be becoming equal with God; for nothing less than the Infinite can contain infinity. Now, it is possible for a man actually to have much higher degrees of inspiration than I can understand or comprehend, or even apprehend; yet it is not possible for any man to be perfectly inspired. There are some things a man may know as well as God, — that is, that one and one make two; but all finite creatures would be unable to contain the whole mind of God. Hence the Christian notion, that Jesus was equal to God, is necessary to sustain the thought that his inspiration was complete and perfect. But there will be various degrees of inspiration, and they will depend not on God directly, but on the capacity of the person who receives. Thus a man of little mind, conscience, affection, religious sentiment, cannot receive so much truth, justice, love, faith, from God as one of larger powers. True, he may be just as full, as a thimble may be just as full as the Baltic Sea, but not hold so much.

Now, we are born with different abilities and so capable of different degrees of inspiration, depending on our quantity of being. But we increase or diminish this power by obedience or disobedience to the laws of our nature; for it is true that any faculty grows by suitable exercise. So it often happens that one born with small abilities, using them

well, re-forms his organization, and gets greater power than his brother more favored by birth. He thus becomes capable of more inspiration, and receives accordingly. But it depends also on the quantity of obedience. A man born with the greatest powers we call a genius. If he uses them well, then he becomes capable of the highest degree of inspiration possible for a man. I look on Jesus of Nazareth as a man of a great moral and religious genius. There are various degrees of inspiration, from Christ down to the humblest man, the wickedest sinner. No man is wholly without it; then he would perish utterly. From the smallest grain of dust from the filthiest kennel, the all-creating, all-sustaining God has not withdrawn. There are various forms of manifestation. One has the inspiration for common trades of life, one for ruling a nation, one for eloquence, one for piety; this for morals, that for art, — each man according to his several ability. A wise man, a good man, a holy man, is inspired to moral wisdom, goodness, holiness. Still, there is only one kind of inspiration, only one mode of inspiration, only one test of inspiration.

I look on the whole outward world as inspired, as the dwelling-place of God, — not God, but his shadow, so to say, cast in matter and made manifest to the senses, his perpetual work; for I cannot

think that God was present at the creation of the world, and then withdrew, but is always here. Hence the world becomes to me not only a wonder and a beauty, but a most holy thing. It is God's thought which I read in the sublime language of chemistry, geology, astronomy, geometry; which I hear in the little nursery-song as it were of the flowers and the grass, of the evening wind, and the song of the birds. I can sympathize with the boy who, when he first saw a beautiful flower, fell on his face in prayer and silent psalms. Then, too, each little thing becomes attractive. I feel a certain relationship between myself and the earth I stand on; yes, and each little thing upon it. For me God is in the sun, in every bush. I hear his voice in the low undertone of the sea, in the wild bee's hum. I can say to the worm, Thou art my mother or my sister, and be pleased with the family tie which links me on one side with the angels in heaven and on the other with the clod of dirt under my feet. Then, too, I find a certain holiness everywhere. All ground is holy ground; each particular star is bright with God; each blade of grass rustles with his breath; and I find he looks at me with a thousand eyes that never close. I commune with him everywhere. In a picture gallery I find the past thoughts and feelings of the artist who put them there; but in the ground, the

air, the heavens, I find God's thought to-day. He speaks with me afresh, as to Adam, in a world which is continually new and full of him.

See in this the goodness of God, and the hope which remains for you and me. Each created thing has its joy and its delight. Must it not be so with the Creator? Must not his existence be one continual joy and an infinite delight? What can it be but this, — to create joy and delight, welfare, holiness, in the finite worlds? Tell me that God made man to glorify and to praise him; ay, but he made man, made Christ and the archangels, that they might all be blessed. Finite creatures, we depend on outward things to give us joy, blessed by receiving; he depends only on himself, blessed by the gift. Our joy is to receive his inspiration, whole and complete in this body, as health and strength and beauty; in the soul, as wisdom, goodness, piety, love, — in beauty of holiness. But his joy must be to impart all this; for he delights not only in his own infinite well-being, but in the finite welfare of you and me, — yes, of the humblest worm that crawls the earth. If you love your child or friend, you aim to communicate your joys to him. God is the fountain, ever full, which runs over and fills the world with loveliness, with life, with conscious bliss. See how he provides for the material world! Look at this green summer, at this wide earth, this

mighty sea, all full of blessed life; look at the heavens, where each particular star is a gem of beauty, and the whole world makes one world of eternal loveliness, and all this but the habitation and furniture of immortal souls, into whom God pours himself, to be made manifest in higher forms of higher life.

Then, what a glorious spectacle it is! How much nobler seems the earthly globe when viewed as God's material dwelling-place, its every part his work, the sign of his life, the proof of his power, the emblem of his love! Look on the soul of man, your own reason, conscience, affections, faith; how much more dignified seems now this spiritual soul when you find man thus the child of God, the vessel into which the inspiration of the Almighty waits to flow! See how that eternal Provider provides for mankind! He provides for all, not by miracle, but by law; for at the beginning he foresaw the wants of men as he sees them now. Notice the laws and conditions of inspiration, — that God withholds not his spirit from the lowest soul; that he withdraws not wholly from the most sinful, but continues still to bless. See what capacity we have to receive inspiration from him! the more we have, the more we hunger, and hungering more, are fed more full. Prayer, what is it? But an effort, first, to put our soul in the true condition to receive from

him, in its most active state; and, second, the sallying forth into the world of truth, justice, love. Sure, this is prayer, — the soul's lawful activity, self-consciousness of communion with God. God rules the world, not by miracle, but law; not by external force, by thunders and lightnings on Sinai's top, but by imparting his inspiration to mankind, — now as truth of science, philosophy, theology, art, letters; now as sentiment, justice, righteousness, and universal love. Truth is God's word and its own proof; love is God's sentiment and its own sanction. He that has them is just so far inspired. Of this inspiration all are capable; yes, all receive less or more. Education of the mind, heart, conscience, or religious sentiment best enlarges our power to receive yet more of the divine fulness. He that is born a genius is capable of much; if I of less, then will not I complain, — for if my cup be full, it is all that I can ask. But by use I shall become capable of more, and then of more, and so of greater excellence and of more joyful life.

Tell me not that inspiration is a rare thing. Is God's power rare in Nature? Nay, there is no spot where he dwells not and forever. Has he forsaken the soul of man, content to live in matter only, and reveal himself in the varying form of yonder star, — not in new life, in poet, prophet,

artist? To me that thought seems cold, un-Christian, akin to atheism. I know it is not true. No; in the wickedest man there is a spark of God, which is yet the light of all his being. God inspires the race, each man according to his soul's ability, and so provides for all. What hope is here for mankind! See how the race gets better, wiser, higher, every year, spite of the follies of men! See what a future there is for man!— not a future to be dreamed of, but worked for, prayed for, and nobly won. See what hope there is for us! Are you a wise man and a good man, but fearing lest base and wicked men shall prevail? Fear no more; the Infinite is here; his counsel shall prevail, and all men shall be blessed. For the thing first in the counsel of God must ever be to impart his spirit to all his sons.

1848.

THE END.